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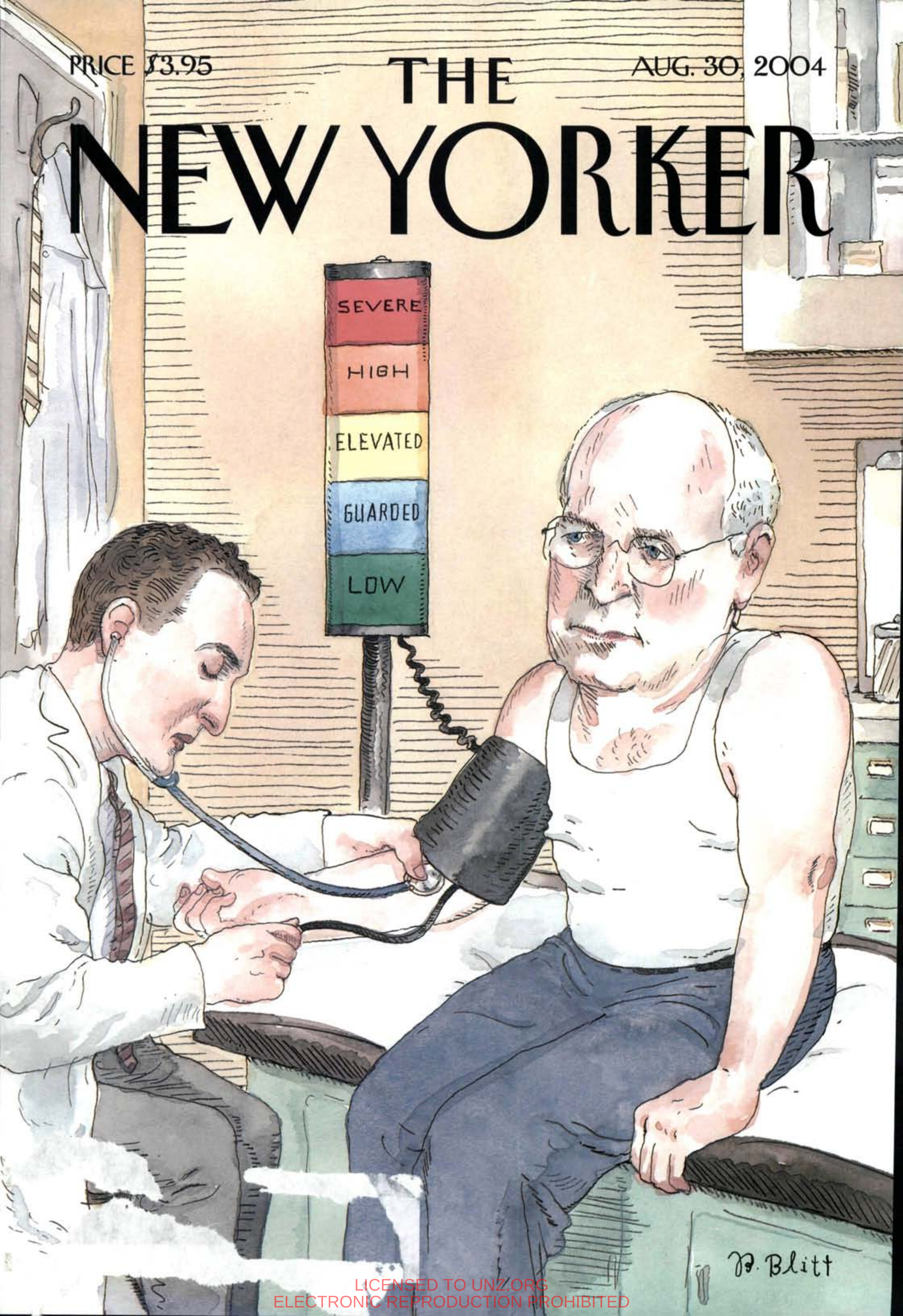
AUG. 30, 2004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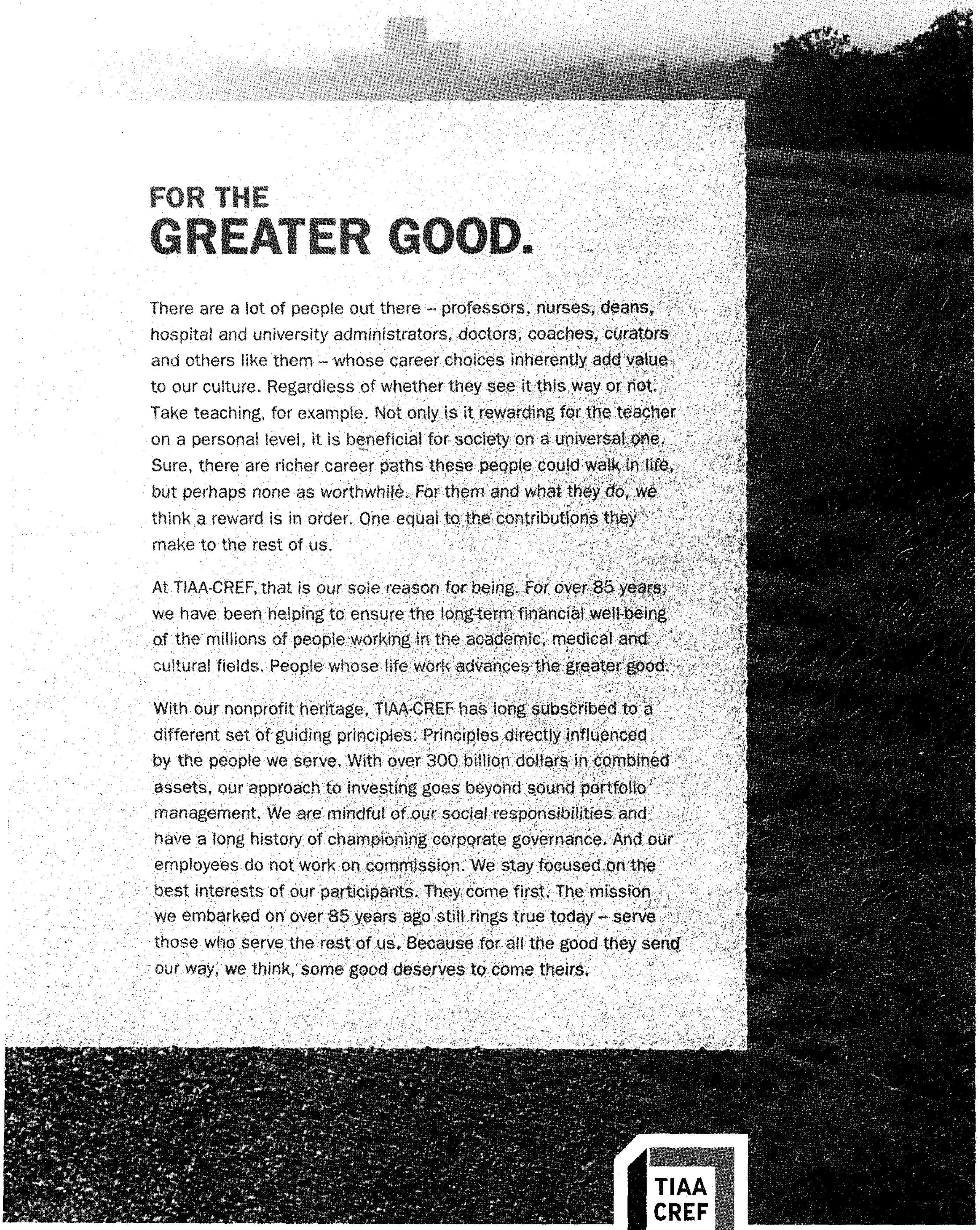

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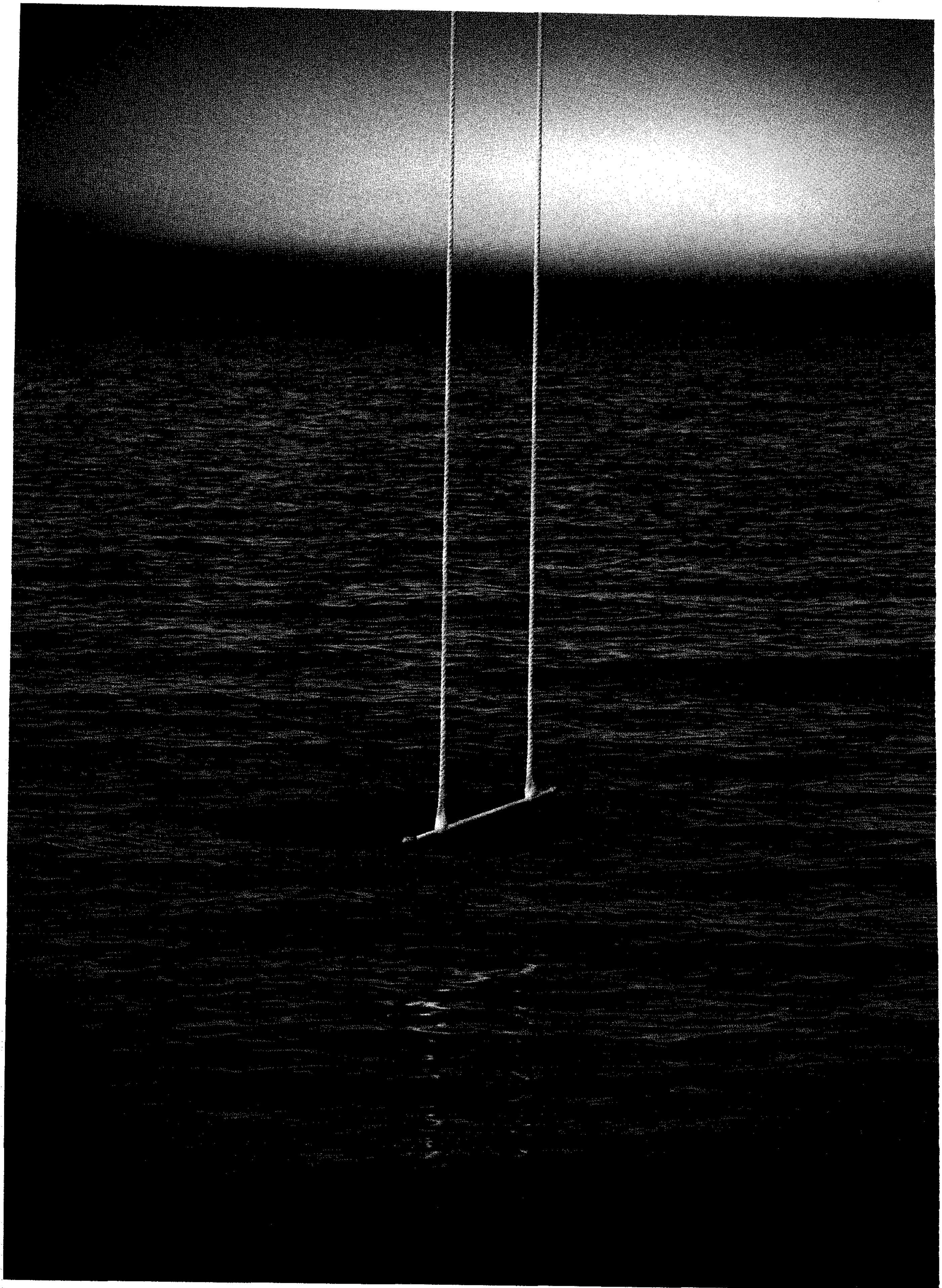

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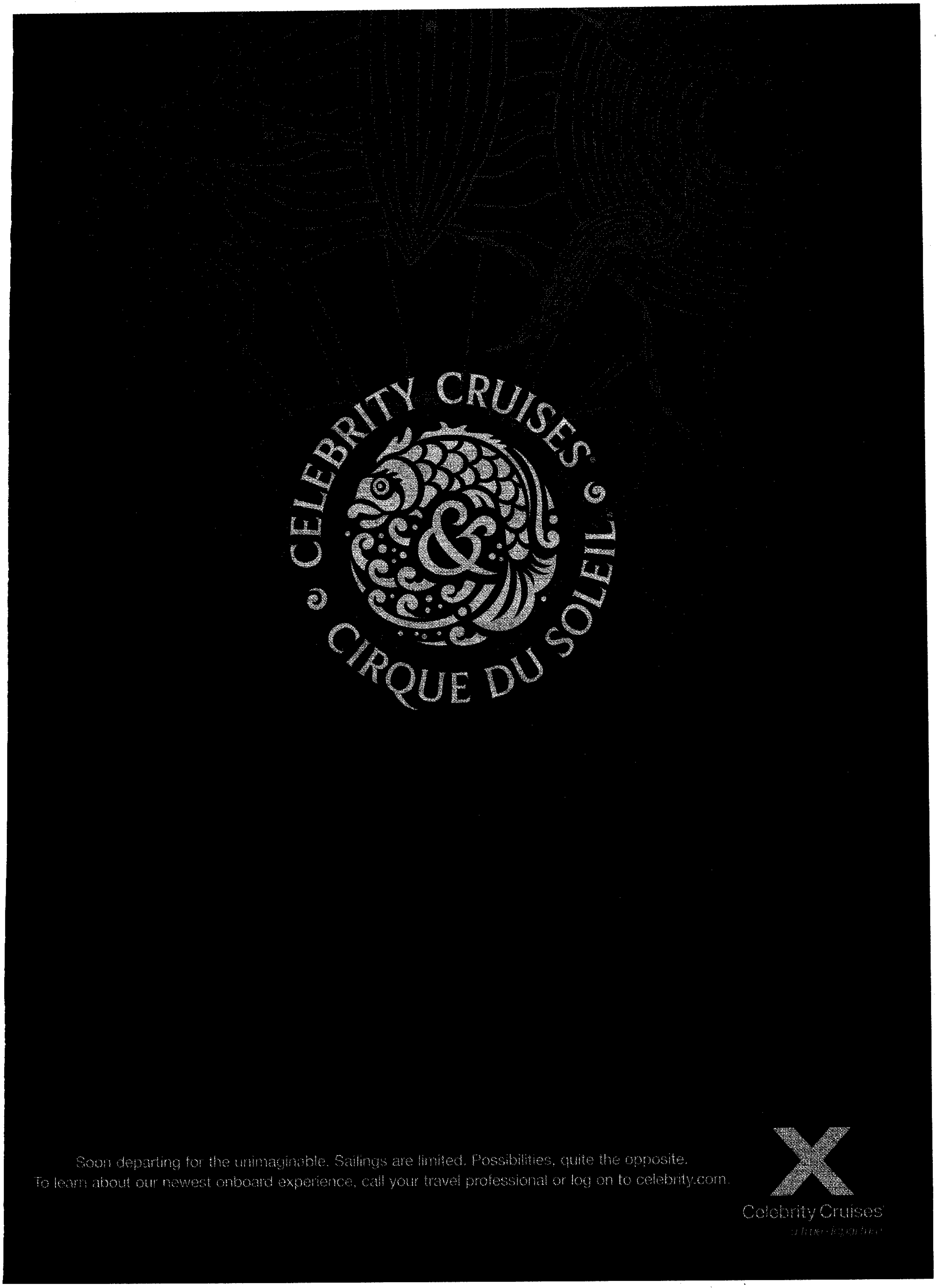
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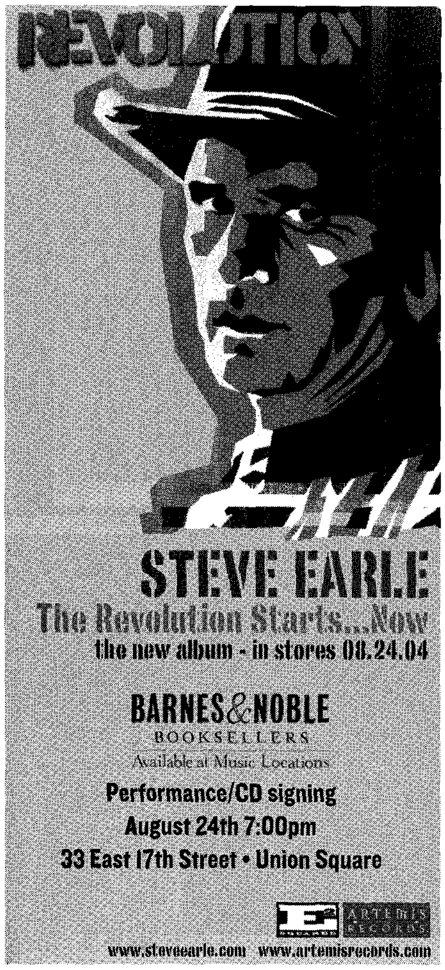

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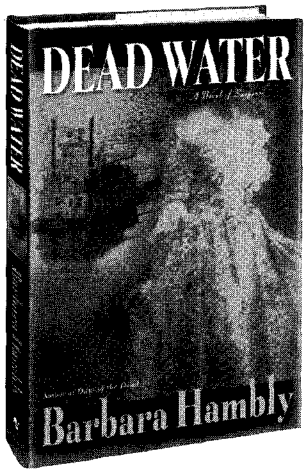

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CONTRIBUTORS

George Packer ("The Playing Field," p. 42) has reported for the magazine from Iraq, Ivory Coast, and Sierra Leone.

William Finnegan (Comment, p. 33) has been writing for the magazine since 1984. He has written four books, including "Cold New World" and "A Complicated War."

Samantha Power ("Dying in Darfur," p. 56) won the Pulitzer Prize in nonfiction last year for her book " 'A Problem from Hell': America and the Age of Genocide."

Kevin Conley ("How High Can You Go?," p. 48) is a staff writer.

Nick Paumgarten ("The Boys," p. 74) is an editor at the magazine.

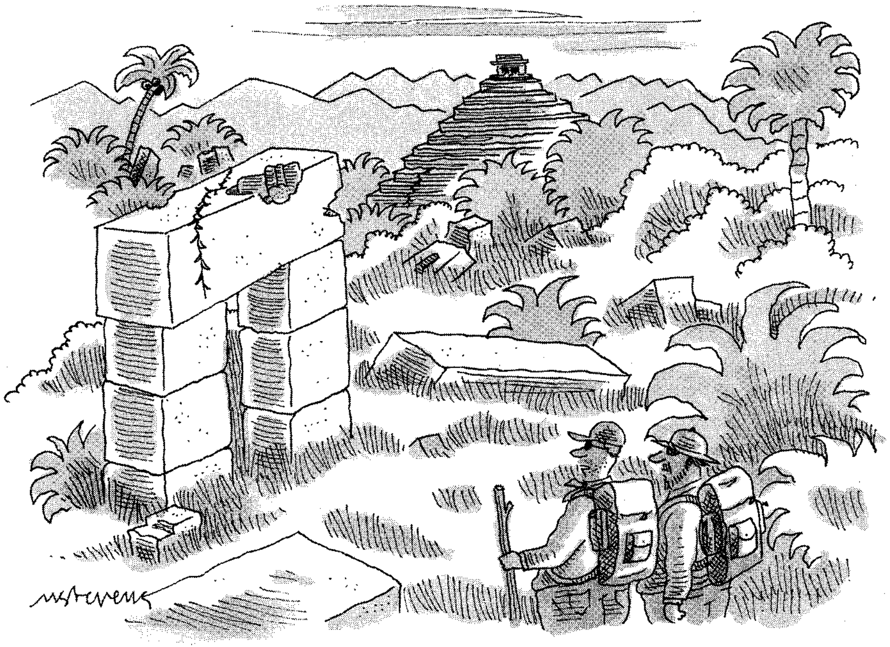
Jon Stewart and the writers of "The Daily Show" ("What Government Best Suits You?," p. 64) have a book coming out next month entitled "America (The Book): A Citizen's Guide to Democracy Inaction."

Czeslaw Milosz (Poems, pp. 54, 70, 78, 94), the poet, essayist, translator, and scholar, was born in Szetejnie, Lithuania, in 1911 and died in Kraków on August 14th. He published his poems in the underground press in Poland during the Second World War, and his many books of poetry in English translation include "Bells in Winter," "Unattainable Earth," "New and Collected Poems 1931-2001," and "Second Space," which will be published next month. He taught in the Slavic Department at the University of California at Berkeley, and was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1980.

Tessa Hadley (Fiction, p. 84) is the author of the novels "Accidents in the Home" and "Everything Will Be All Right."

Louis Menand (A Critic at Large, p. 92) is the author of "The Metaphysical Club" and "American Studies." He teaches at Harvard.

John Updike (Books, p. 98) has a new novel, "Villages," coming out in the fall. ♦



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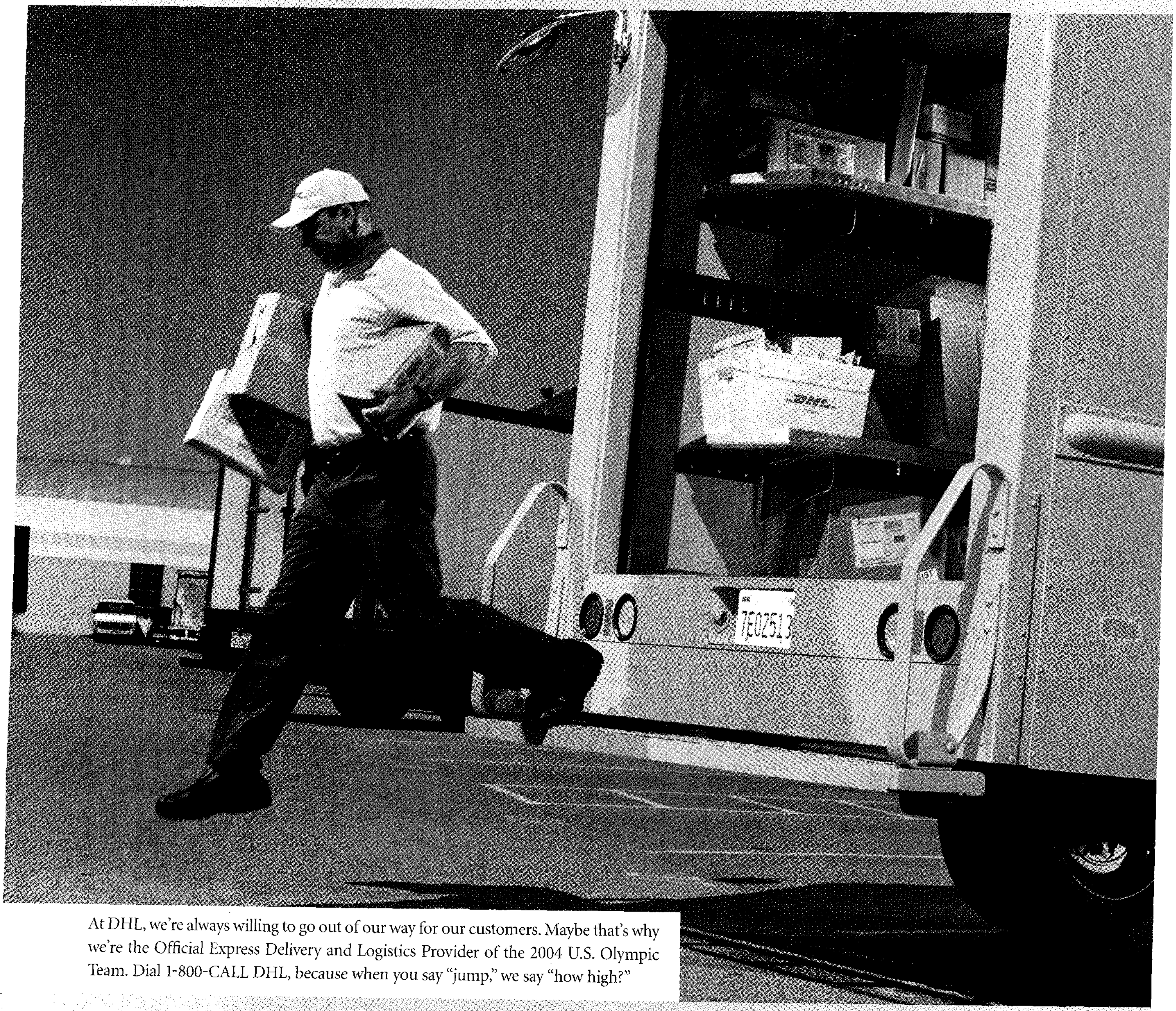

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THE GIVING MAN

Zell Kravinsky should not be made into a hero for donating one of his kidneys to a sick woman he did not know, and then considering donating his second kidney to another stranger, or even becoming the first total (living) body donor, so that he could save even more lives ("The Gift," by Ian Parker, August 2nd). Sacrificing one human life in exchange for many lives is an impressive moral imperative, except that it is, of course, quite mad. In slowly dismantling himself, Kravinsky would not only be killing himself; he would be (emotionally) murdering his wife and children. Even on his own utilitarian terms, Kravinsky's math is off, especially if he factors in the risk of organ rejection and the wear and tear of infectious diseases on immune-suppressed recipients. Kravinsky's Franciscan impulse to strip himself bare and rid himself of all his troublesome worldly goods (including his own body-self) speaks, albeit eloquently, to his self-loathing and narcissistic injury. Kravinsky's search for "ethical euphoria" is similar to that of the teen-age suicide bomber's. The surgeons who allowed the nephrectomy on such a vulnerable human being should be chastised. Pathological generosity, even in the service of humanitarianism, is not something to encourage. Kravinsky needs to find a better way to love mankind than by hating himself.

Nancy Scheper-Hughes
Professor of Medical Anthropology; Director, Organs Watch; University of California
Berkeley, Calif.

As a fellow graduate student at the University of Pennsylvania, I knew Zell Kravinsky in the early nineteen-nineties. Parker's profile makes clear that Kravinsky himself is quite aware of the complexity of his own motives. There are two separate desires at work: the desire to enrich others and the desire to impoverish oneself. Kravinsky's investment skills demonstrate that the two need not always go together. But neither the source of his commitment nor its sensational nature should invalidate his example of how to make doing good the purpose of one's life.

Lisa R. Myers
Philadelphia, Pa.

Buddha's compassion for suffering mankind led to enlightenment, inner peace, and joy. St. Paul's inner struggle with the absolute demands of the law opened up a dimension of grace that permeates human existence. Taoism showed the limits and destructive effects of human efforts to seek total control over life's processes. The wise men and saints of history knew when to let go. Parker shows that Kravinsky's obsessive guilt about the suffering of others leaves no room for grace, for joy, for peace. Real-estate deals may profit from mathematical reductionism; life does not.

Frank J. Mininni,
Professor of Philosophy Emeritus
Marshall University
Greenville, S.C.

Kravinsky is morally bankrupt. Where is the righteousness in his choice to save one life, when, if he concentrated on building wealth, something he is good at, he could fund research that might help to save millions? Where is the "ethical ecstasy" in squandering time and talent instead of leveraging it? For a man who claims to understand math, his "calculus of utilitarianism" doesn't add up.

Sandra L. Hudson
Iowa City, Iowa

Kravinsky is clearly nuts. But so are all the saints and geniuses that we are given to emulate. He suffers the exquisite agony of his scrupulous conscience, but what flowers from him benefits us all.

Mary Christopher
Silver Star, Mont.

•

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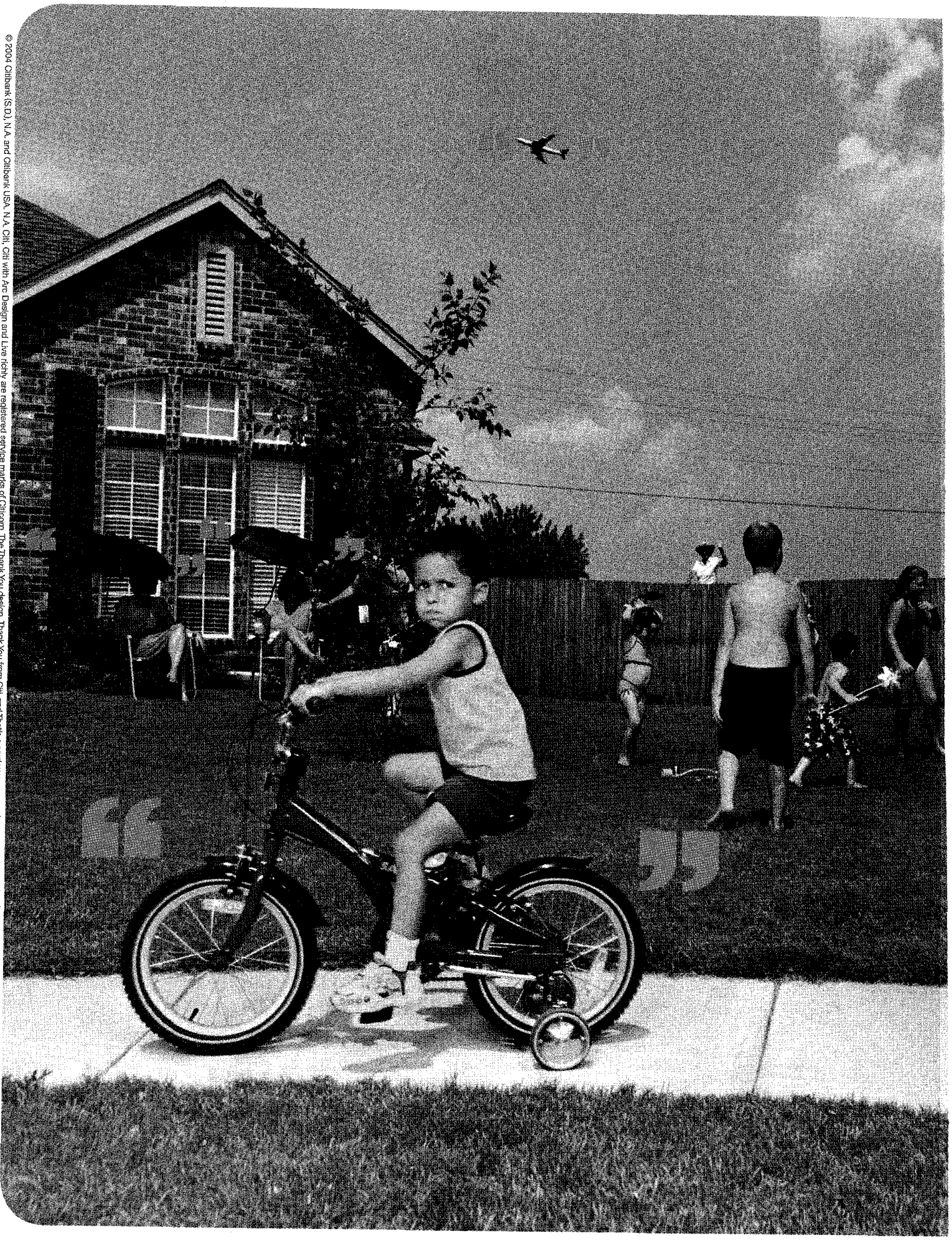

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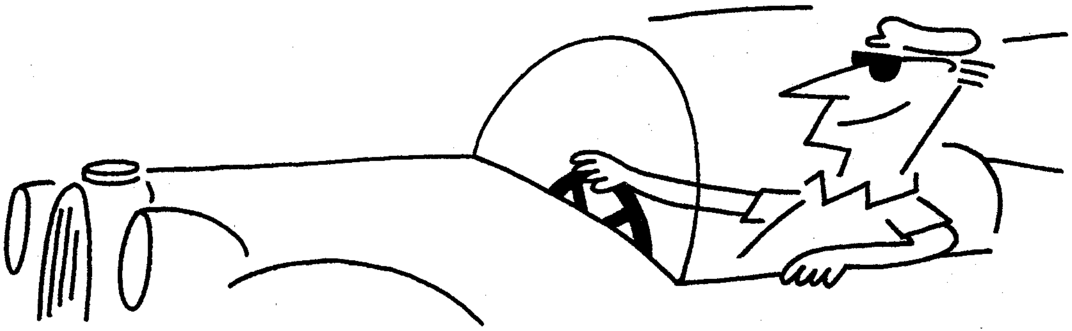

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For expanded events listings, please visit www.newyorker.com/goingson.

THIS WEEK

THIS GUITAR KILLS APATHY

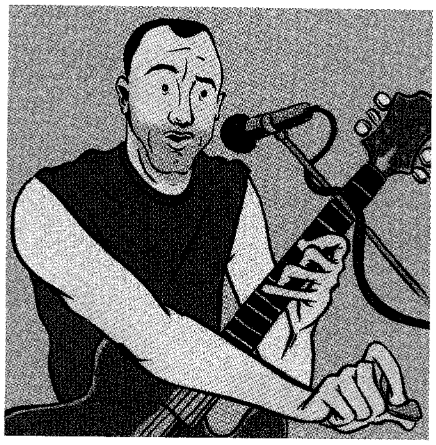
The singer-songwriter Dan Bern, who sometimes goes by Bernstein, has been hailed, like countless other singer-songwriters, as a new Dylan. The comparison is founded not just on Bern's nasal voice, prolific songwriting, and quirky sense of humor, but sometimes even on specific melodies (his romantic epic "Estelle" lifted the tune from Dylan's "Brownsville Girl"). Like Dylan, Bern tends to alternate between the intimately personal and the defiantly political; his latest release, "My Country II," is a collection of witty anti-Bush songs, some of which he's sure to perform this week. (Joe's Pub, Aug. 28; see Night Life.)

ODE TO GIOIA

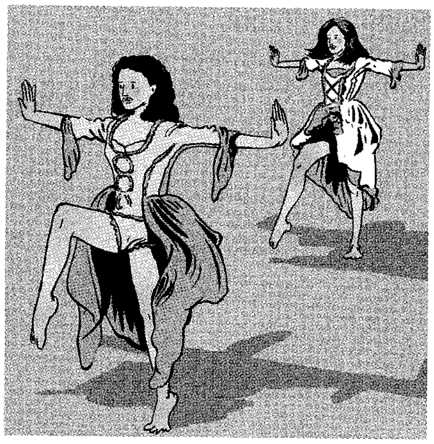
The dances of the Belgian choreographer Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker are often melancholy, but her 1992 work "Mozart/Concert Aria, un Moto di Gioia" ("an emotion of joy") earns its subtitle. Light and quick-moving, the dance plays with contrasts. Men first appear in courtly dress, partnered by women in short-skirted black suits; later, women appear in baroque costumes, dancing with men wearing simple shifts. They hop, roll on the floor, cry for no reason, and tease the gifted sopranos who serenade them. With live accompaniment by the Orchestra of St. Luke's. (LaGuardia Concert Hall, Aug. 25 and Aug. 27-28; see Classical Music.)

SMOKE 'EM IF YOU'VE GOT 'EM

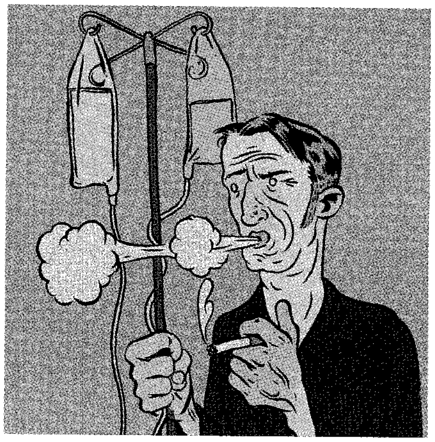
The documentarian Ross McElwee gained attention in 1986 with "Sherman's March," a hilarious chronicle of his misadventures as a single man in the South. McElwee's investigation of personal and regional identity continues in his new film, "Bright Leaves," which looks into the role of tobacco in his family's past—McElwee's great-grandfather created the Bull Durham tobacco blend—while touching on broader issues like mortality, economics, and creativity. (Film Forum, Aug. 25; see Movies.)



The singer-songwriter Dan Bern, appearing at Joe's Pub.

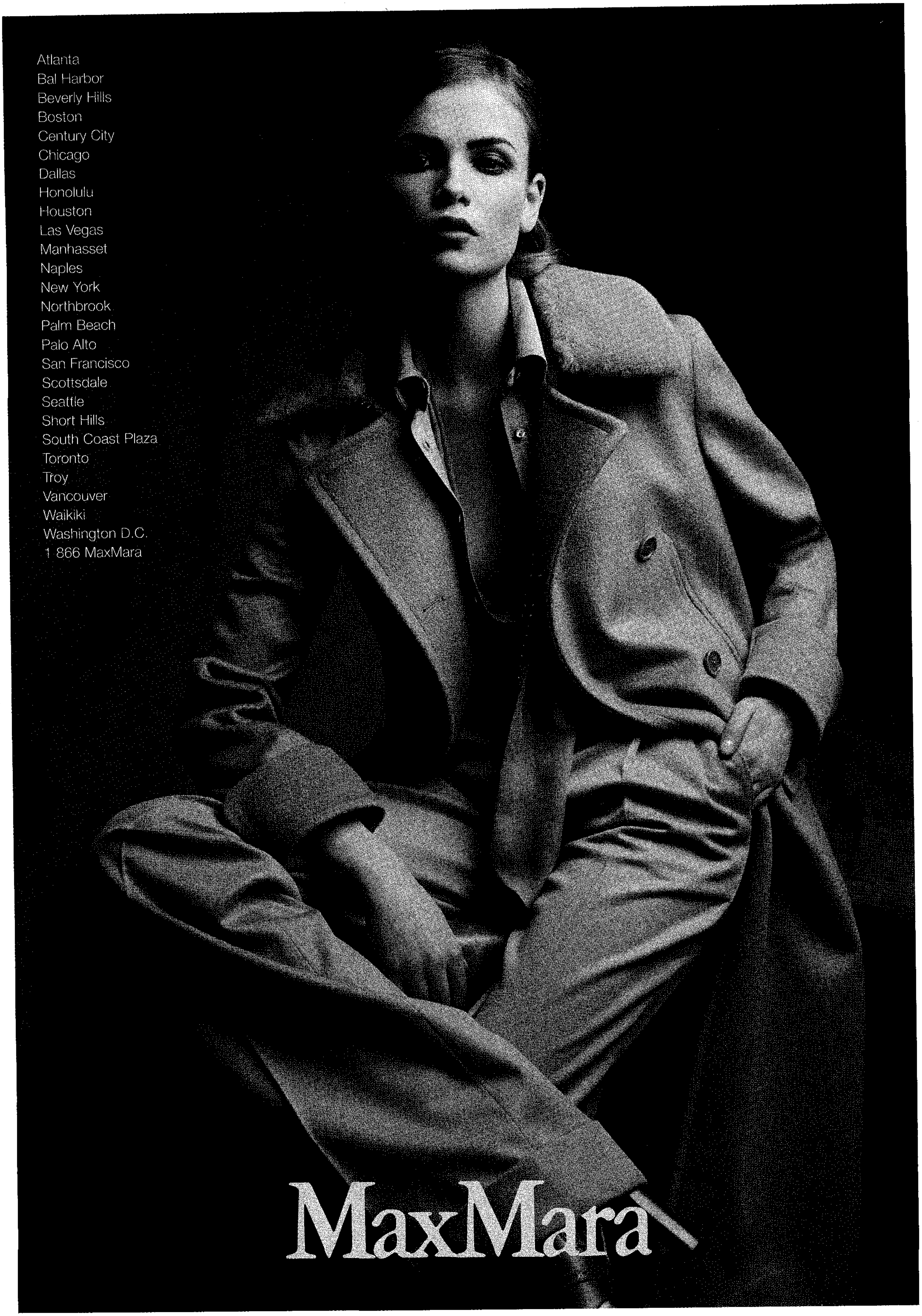


The work of Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, at Lincoln Center.



ZOHAR LAZAR

Ross McElwee's family-and-tobacco documentary, "Bright Leaves."



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GUANTÁNAMO: HONOR BOUND TO DEFEND FREEDOM
A drama about post-9/11 detainees in Guantánamo, composed of interviews with prisoners and their families, comes to the Culture Project (home of "The Exonerated") after a long run in London—where it is still playing. Written by Victoria Brittain and Gillian Slovo. Directed by Nicolas Kent with Sacha Wares. Two previews on Aug. 25. Opens Aug. 26 at 7. (45 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100.)

NEW YORK INTERNATIONAL FRINGE FESTIVAL
The eighth annual festival features shows by some two hundred theatre companies from nine countries and dozens of U.S. cities. They have little in common but idiosyncrasy. Some plays to look out for: "Africa & Plumbridge," a musical about a troubled foster child; "Mankynde," a medieval musical satire spiked with allusions to the 2004 election and "Fear Factor"; "Armless," Kyle Jarrow's farce about a man who suffers from body-integrity-identity disorder; "Haven," a one-woman show about recent immigrants to this country; and "Live! With Pascale & Chantal," a spoof of Middle Eastern talk shows. Through Aug. 29. (212-279-4488. For a list of venues and performances, see www.fringenyc.org.)

THE OLDEST PROFESSION
The Signature Theatre Company's 2004-05 season is dedicated to the works of Paula Vogel. It starts off with a comic drama set during the early days of the Reagan Administration, about five aging bawds who struggle with arthritis and a diminishing clientele. Directed by David Esbjornson. In previews. (Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

SLAVA'S SNOWSHOW
In this seriocomic spectacle by the Russian clown Slava Polunin, hobo clowns perform existential antics, culminating in a giant paper snowstorm that blows across the stage and onto the audience. In previews. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 212-505-0700.)

SYMPHONIE FANTASTIQUE
The puppeteer Basil Twist's fantastical work—set to Berlioz's hour-long, five-movement composition and performed in a thousand-gallon glass tank—comes to the brand-new Dodger Stages. Previews begin Aug. 31. (340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

AFTER THE FALL
This drama by Arthur Miller, which premièred in 1964, three years after the end of his troubled marriage to Marilyn Monroe and two years after her spectacular flameout and death, marked a departure for the playwright, stretching his technical and intellectual boundaries. A sprawling work, less conventionally structured than his earlier plays, it is set in 1962 in the transit lounge of the old Idlewild Airport, within the "mind, thought, and memory" of its protagonist, Quentin, a twice-divorced lawyer whose conscience struggles against the uniform thinking of the mob—here composed almost entirely of women. In the Roundabout's revival, the director, Michael Mayer, has given the play new form by cutting it down, giving it a shape that is close to that of "Death of a Salesman." Unfortunately, even with the cuts, Peter Krause, as Quentin, just isn't up to the task of making this academic language live. A remarkably thin actor, he's a blank sheet of paper that resists emotion and ideas. But Carla Gugino's Maggie (presumably based on Marilyn Monroe) is a revelation. She, along with Mayer, makes "After the Fall" worth revisiting, like a dark garden filled with the mesmerizing scent of decay and hope. (Reviewed in our issue of 8/9 & 16/04.) (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.)

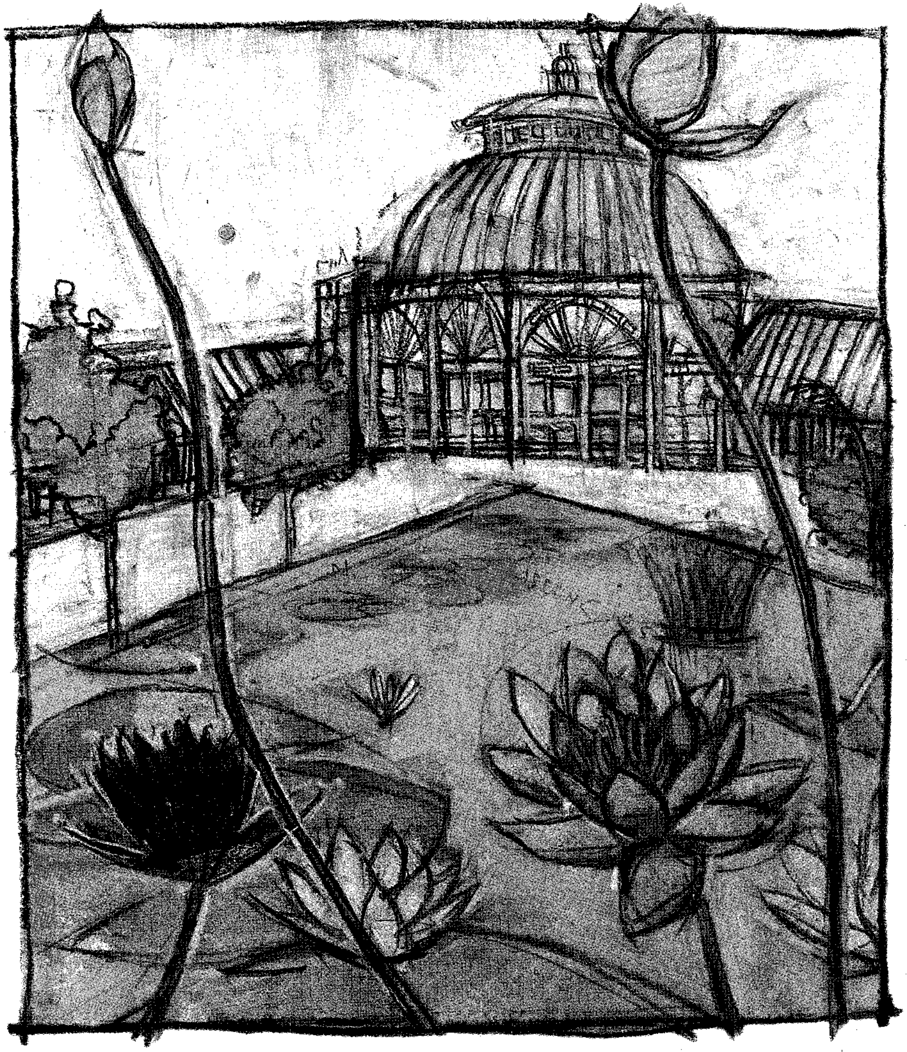
BRYAN DYKSTRA: CORNERED & ALONE
The local comedian launches a fearless attack on the current Administration. Directed by Margarett Perry. (Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 212-352-3101.)

THE DAY EMILY MARRIED
Horton Foote's play is crowded with small-town incident and revelation. It's not a great work of art—it lacks the necessary scope—but it has great moments, the products of Foote's unimpeachable dramatic sense. Lyd Davis (Estelle Parsons) and her husband, Lee (William Biff McGuire), are landowners in the imaginary cotton town of Harrison, Texas, who are thinking about retiring and selling their farm. Lyd is seventy-five, a former flapper who has lost none of her flap. Her daughter, Emily (the playwright's daughter, Hallie Foote), is preparing to marry Richard Murray (James Colby), a handsome bear of a man with a special interest in the Davises' property. As mothers go, Lyd has always been a millstone around Emily's neck, and Parsons's evocation of Lyd's constant stream of memory, pain, failed dreams, and dashed hopes is astonishing. There's a rhythm to the dialogue: recognizably Southern but not rhetorical. The sound belongs to another era, the era of radio plays, when audiences relied on exposition and the externalization of a character's inner drama to keep the story moving. Part of what makes Michael Wilson's direction so good is his ability to explore from the outset the characters' motivations and inner lives, laying the groundwork for their sad end. A Primary Stages production. (8/23/04) (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

DRACULA, THE MUSICAL
A new Broadway play inspired by the Bram Stoker story, starring Melissa Errico and Tom Hewitt, has a book and lyrics by Christopher Hampton and Don Black, and music by Frank Wildhorn. Directed by Des McAnuff. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

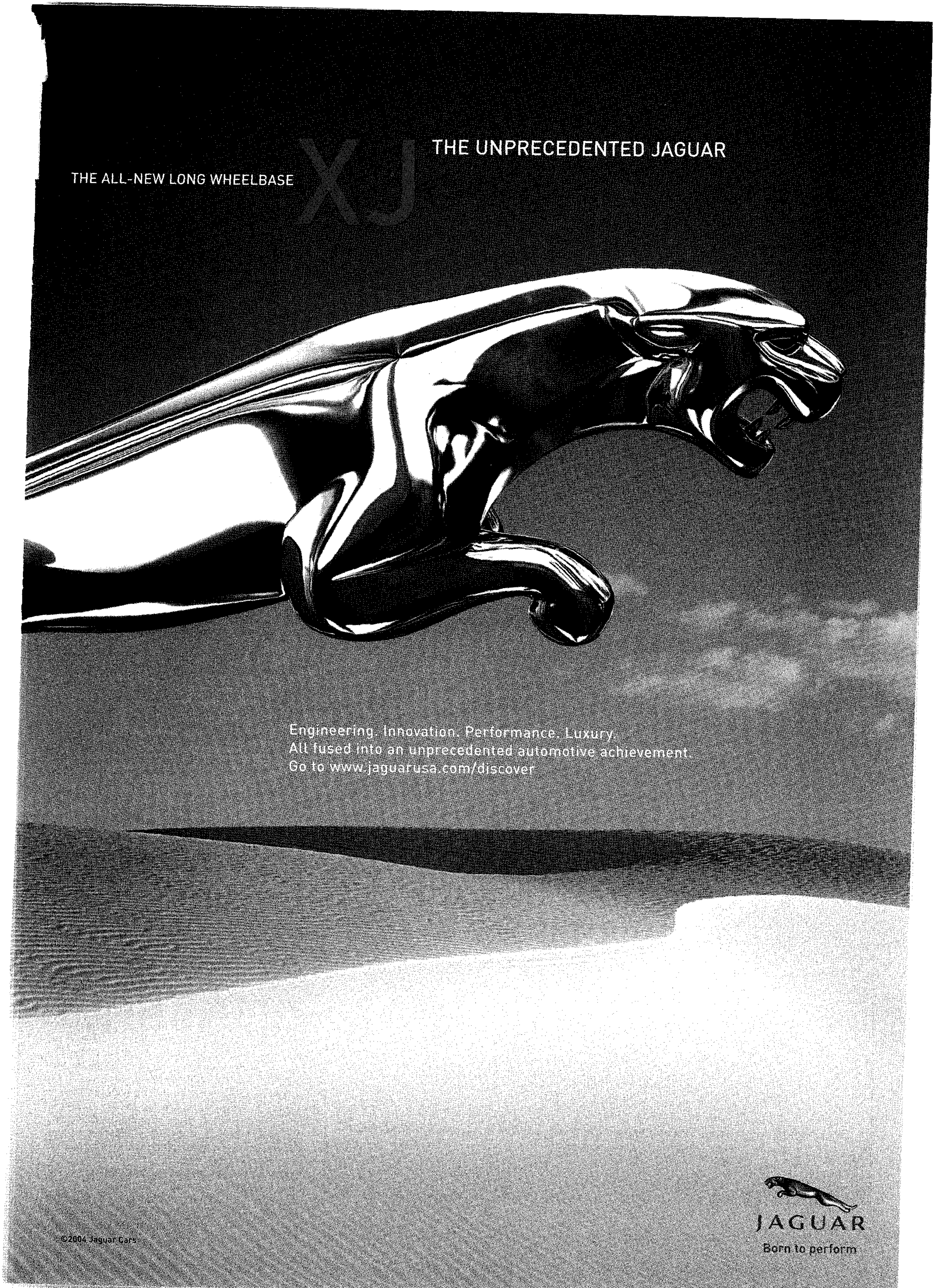
ECHOES OF THE WAR
Two fine one-act plays by J. M. Barrie, written during the First World War, show emotions on the home front. In the first, "The New Word," starring Richard Easton and Aaron Krohn, a diffident father and son say their goodbyes. In the second, "The Old Lady Shows Her Medals," Frances Sternhagen, playing a timid Scottish char who longs for a visit from her son, and Gareth Saxe, as the brusque, handsome son, both give brilliant performances. Directed by Eleanor Reissa. (Mint, 311 W. 43rd St. 212-315-0231. Closes Aug. 29.)

FICTION
The estimable playwright Steven Dietz is a postmodernist of sorts. His main characters, Linda (Julie White) and Michael (Tom Irwin), are lovers and writers. They speak directly to the audience, which means that they talk—and talk and talk—a great deal about writing. Dietz, though, is too canny to leave the narrative to Linda's and Michael's words alone. To lend the play dramatic heft, he gives Linda cancer and Michael a brief dalliance with the organizer of a writers' conference. Blond and opinionated, Abby (Emily Bergl) is just the kind of girl who can drag a writer out of his head and into his body, by way of hers. And while this is all very absorbing to consider—the truth in lies, the deceit in action—the points the play tries to make are only marginally engaging, because they feel just like that: points. Directed by David Warren. (8/23/04) (Roundabout, Laura Pels Theatre, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)



"Waterlilies and Lotus: A Summer Aquatic Exhibition," in the conservatory courtyard at the New York Botanical Garden, in the Bronx (see Art).

N. ASCENCIOS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THE FROGS
If you like your Aristophanes by way of overproduced Burt Bacharach-style slickness, there is much to recommend "The Frogs" (part of the Lincoln Center Festival, at the Vivian Beaumont). Freely adapted by Burt Shevelove from the 405 B.C. comedy, with music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim, the show was originally produced in 1974 at the Yale School of Drama with a cast that included a number of students, among them Meryl Streep, Sigourney Weaver, and Christopher Durang. Here the main event is Nathan Lane, who stars as Dionysos and who has also expanded Shevelove's script from one hour to two and a half. A self-consciously adorable one-man band in a toga, Lane goes out of his way to upstage all the other performers, not to mention the text itself. Suffice it to say that the cloying sentiment at the heart of Lane's windup-puppy style of acting infects everything here, including Susan Stroman's so-so direction and choreography. (8/9 & 16/04) (212-239-6200.)

I LOVE PARIS
You get pretty much what you'd expect in Doug Field's tongue-in-cheek sendup of the socialite heiress Paris Hilton—a heaping portion of celebrity dish with no real surprises. Hilton is played with wide-eyed opacity by Kevin Shinick, who enters the stage in BVDs and a T-shirt. Directed by Timothy Haskell. (Blue Heron Arts Center, 123 E. 24th St. 212-868-4444.)

LET'S PUT ON A SHOW
Mickey Rooney and his wife, Jan, bring a musical retrospective of the actor's life and loves to the Irish Repertory Theatre. With musical direction by Sam Kriger. (132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737.)

THE LOVES OF SHAKESPEARE'S WOMEN
The actress Susannah York wrote and performs in a solo show that shows the thread of passion that connects the female characters—whether historic or invented—in Shakespeare's plays. (Blue Heron Arts Center, 123 E. 24th St. 212-868-4444. Through Aug. 29.)

MEDEA IN JERUSALEM
Roger Kirby's update of Euripides' tragedy imagines Medea as a Palestinian Muslim and Jason as an Israeli Jew. Actual recent news reports take the place of a chorus, which works to some degree, but the ones that involve a failed effort to bring peace to Middle Eastern kids through puppets are problematic. The gravitas of the heroine, played by the sinuous dancer and actress Rebecca Wisocky, is not enhanced by the fact that she's simply a betrayed wife, not a betrayed queen. And Kirby's Jason (Sean Haberle) has too much power and not enough kingliness. Still, the set, by Nicolai Hart-Hansen, with lighting by Thom Weaver, is wonderfully evocative, built around two stone doorways that, depending on the light, look like the twin tablets of the Ten Commandments. Directed by Steven Little. (Rattlestick, 224 Waverly Pl. 212-868-4444. Through Sept. 4.)

MRS. FARNSWORTH
A. R. Gurney's play about a Connecticut Wasp who had a compromising relationship with the current President returns to the Flea. Directed by Jim Simpson. (41 White St. 212-352-3101. Through Sept. 4.)

PLUMS IN NEW YORK
In this manic yet charming one-woman romp, the exuberant and limber Anna Rósa Sigurdardóttir plays Gudrún, a solipsistic Icelandic writer living in New York, whose body is inhabited by the spirit of the Swedish author August Strindberg. This communion seizes her from time to time, provoking heavy breathing and a variety of highly sexualized yoga poses. Written by Sigurdardóttir and directed by Hera Ólafsdóttir. With original, live music by Rósa Gudmundsdóttir and a terrific video backdrop by Egill Ingibergsson and Móeidur Helgadóttir. (Clurman, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

WAITIN' 2 END HELL
William A. Parker's drama about the failing marriage of a black middle-class couple has some sharp writing in it, especially in its insightful treatment of the complex relationships between black women and black men. It also has stellar performances from its two leads, Marcus Naylor and Trish McCall. Directed by Woodie King, Jr. (47th Street Playhouse, 304 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. Through Sept. 12.)

ALSO PLAYING

AIDA
Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-307-4747.
AVENUE Q
Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.
BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 212-307-4747.
BOMBAY DREAMS
Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 212-239-6200.
THE BOY FROM OZ
Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.
BUG
Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St., at Seventh Ave. 212-239-6200.
CAROLINE, OR CHANGE
Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. (Closes Aug. 29.)
CHICAGO
Ambassador, 215 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.
FIDDLER ON THE ROOF
Minskoff, 200 W. 45th St. 212-307-4100.
42ND STREET
Ford Center, 213 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.
GOLDA'S BALCONY
Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.
HAIRSPRAY
Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100.
I AM MY OWN WIFE
Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.
MAMMA MIA!
Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-563-5544.
MOVIN' OUT
Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 212-307-4100.
THE PRODUCERS
St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.
RENT
Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 212-307-4100.
WICKED
Gershwin, 222 W. 51st St. 212-307-4100.
WONDERFUL TOWN
Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

DANCE

"FOREVER TANGO"
Luis Bravo's evening of Argentine dance features fourteen dancers and an eleven-piece orchestra. It's the final week of the show's tenth-anniversary run. (Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. Aug. 24 and Aug. 26-27 at 8, Aug. 25 and Aug. 28 at 2 and 8, and Aug. 29 at 3.)

"LINCOLN CENTER OUT OF DOORS"
The summer festival of free outdoor performances concludes. On the plaza, on Aug. 25 at 6, the Kahurangi Maori Dance Theatre of New Zealand demonstrates another Polynesian tradition (last week it was hula), spicing a cultural-history lesson with humor and spectacle. In the band shell, on Aug. 25 at 8, an old-meets-new double bill pairs Dallas Black Dance Theatre with Ronald K. Brown's Evidence; and, on Aug. 26, the California-born Maria Bermudez and her company, Sonidos Gitanos Flamenco, stay true to the improvised musician-and-dancer conversations of *flamenco puro,* which she soaked up as an expatriate in Jerez de la Frontera, in Spain. On Aug. 28, the Divine Divas of Oriental Belly Dance reveal a range of undulant abdomens. (For more information about performances, venues, and times, see www.lincolncenter.org or call 212-875-5766. Through Aug. 30.)

"YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOREVER FOR WHAT YOU TAME"
Oral histories by Queens residents who remember the 1939 and 1964 World's Fairs have been woven into a quartet by the choreographer Ursula Eagly.

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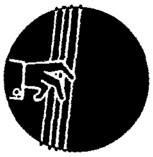
JAZZ NOTES



SOUTH OF THE BORDER

Three years ago, when Charlie Haden explored Latin-American standards on his album "Nocturne," the result was as bracing as a top-shelf margarita. His new release, **"Land of the Sun"** (Verve), covers similar ground, focussing on Mexican composers, but without as much success. "Nocturne" was sensual and mysterious; "Sun" leans toward the languid. The earlier album's romantic violin is gone, replaced with flute, acoustic guitar, and trumpet. Darker passions are dissolved, and some of the tunes are uncomfortably sweet. Still, Haden is a master bassist, and "Sun," despite its faults, is refreshing for its willingness to put mood and atmosphere in the forefront. "Sun" is also redeemed by gorgeously lyrical solos from, among others, the Cuban pianist Gonzalo Rubalcaba, the tenor saxophonist Joe Lovano, and the altoist Miguel Zenón. Haden contributes a few brief, characteristically deliberate solos, and the improvisation follows the unhurried, breezy feel of the album.

The tenor saxophonist David Sánchez was a featured soloist on "Nocturne." On his own new album, **"Coral"** (Columbia), Sánchez immerses himself in obscure but striking work by such South American composers as Antonio Carlos Jobim, Heitor Villa-Lobos, and Alberto Ginastera. Sánchez is accompanied by the City of Prague Philharmonic Orchestra and prodded by his own sharp group, which includes the Haden associate Zenón. The orchestrations are lush, but, thanks to the arranger and conductor Carlos Franzetti, they never lack rhythmic thrust; some songs, particularly the Ginastera ballad "Vidala," cry out for standard status. What stands out most in the album's classy production, though, is Sánchez himself. He has found the precise point where Stan Getz meets John Coltrane; his delicious yet assertive tone conspires with melodic grace to give his solos poetry and power.

—Steve Futterman

As the dancers move, they whisper isolated World's Fair memories into the ears of audience members, who are asked to pass on the stories to their neighbors, as in the children's game telephone. Performed by Eagly, Eleanor Bauer, Rebecca Davis, and Jessica Morgan. (Topaz Arts, 55-03 39th Ave., Woodside, Queens. 718-986-2364. Aug. 26-27 at 8.)

"TOGETHER FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE"

The Merce Cunningham Studio hosts an evening of dance, music, and poetry, featuring solos by Elizabeth Moley, Valerie Samulski, Jane Sato, and Nupoor Singha; a dance with text by David Appel called "The Reckoning"; and a new quartet by Sue Bernhard, inspired by the Not in Our Name Pledge of Resistance and set to an original score by Dred Scott. Part of the Imagine Festival of Arts, Issues & Ideas. (55 Bethune St. 212-802-4800. Aug. 29 at 7:30.)

OUT OF TOWN

JACOB'S PILLOW DANCE FESTIVAL

The Boston Ballet, celebrating its fortieth anniversary and lately revitalized by the direction of Mikko Nissinen, comes to the main stage in the festival's final week, presenting two Balanchine centennial offerings: the Gershwin song cycle "Who Cares?" and "Duo Concertant," in which musicians play the Stravinsky score live onstage. The evening also includes contemporary works by Val Caniparoli and Jorma Elo and the Mark Morris classic "Drink to Me Only with Thine Eyes," set to Virgil Thomson's score. At the Doris Duke, the choreographer Seán Curran, a former dancer with Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane, premières "Art Song Dance," a collaboration with the composer Ricky Ian Gordon, who performs the piano score of his song cycle live accompanied by a vocal quartet. (Becket, Mass. 413-243-0745. Boston Ballet: Aug. 25-27 at 8, Aug. 28 at 2 and 8, and Aug. 29 at 2. Seán Curran: Aug. 26-27 at 8:15, Aug. 28 at 2:15 and 8:15, and Aug. 29 at 5.)

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

"LINCOLN CENTER OUT OF DOORS"

Aug. 27 at 6: **Agatsuma,** an improvisational master of the samisen, Japan's answer to the banjo. (North Plaza.) Aug. 27 at 7:30: A program of Haitian music with the New York City ensemble **Zin,** and **Lataye,** a Brooklyn-based collective that includes former members of Boukman Eksperyans and a pair of voodoo priests. (Damrosch Park Band Shell.) Aug. 29 at 8: BrazilFest '04, with **Oscar Castro-Neves, Antonio Adolfo, Carol Saboya,** and **Paulo Jobim.** (Damrosch Park Band Shell.) Aug. 30 at 8: Some thirty years after its inception, **Chick Corea's** bombastic brand of fusion sounds no more palatable than it ever did, but the brilliant keyboardist always seems to be having fun when he slums it with his Elektric Band. (Damrosch Park Band Shell. For more information about all the shows, call 212-875-5766.)

"JOE'S PUB IN THE PARK"

Mos Def has been many things: a rapper, an actor ("The Italian Job"), a bookseller (he used to be involved with Nkiru Books, in Brooklyn). So it shouldn't come as a surprise that he's also a jazzman. His big band includes the percussionist **Will Calhoun,** the pianist **Orrin Evans,** the trumpeter **Wallace Roney,** the trombonist **Robin Eubanks,** and the alto saxophonist **Don Braden.** With **Meshell Ndegéocello** and her Spirit Music sextet. (Delacorte Theatre, Central Park near W. 81st St. 212-239-6200. Aug. 27 at 7.)

THE CORRS

Three willowy, attractive Irish sisters and their perpetually overlooked brother. In the early nineties they played folk-twinged Celtic pop, but in recent years they've taken a more mainstream approach. Fiddles and tin whistles still make cameo appearances. (Jones Beach Theatre, 212-307-7171. Aug. 27 at 8.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BARBÈS

376 9th St., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-965-9177)—Aug. 28: **Keren Ann,** an Israeli-born singer-songwriter now based in France, caresses her acoustic guitar and sings about love and loss.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL

237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—Aug. 26: **Jimmy Cliff.** Three decades ago, the movie "The Harder They Come" made the Jamaican reggae singer a star, and in the intervening years he's produced some twenty albums. His latest release is "Black Magic," a collaboration with Wyclef Jean, Annie Lennox, Sting, the late Joe Strummer, and others. Aug. 28: **Strawberry Fields** pays tribute to the Beatles.

BOWERY BALLROOM

6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—Aug. 26: The **Presidents of the United States of America,** an alternative-rock trio from Seattle, hit it big in the mid-nineties with catchy but goofy songs such as "Lump" and "Peaches." By 1998, the band had lost its record deal

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and broken up, and the principal members piddled around in obscurity and floated a few half-baked ideas (including the notion of starting a new group with the anatomically obsessed rapper Sir Mix-a-Lot, a fellow Seattleite) before reforming and releasing an album, "Love Everybody," that reinvigorates their shamelessly silly mission. Aug. 27: The Virginia-born singer-songwriter **John Eddie** dented the charts in the mid-eighties with "Jungle Boy." After dropping out of sight during the nineties, Eddie reappeared last year with the album "Who the Hell Is John Eddie?," which demonstrated that he hasn't lost his knack for bitterly funny roots rock. Aug. 31: The **Wrens,** the pride of Secaucus, New Jersey.

THE HOOK
18 Commerce St., Red Hook, Brooklyn (718-797-3007)—Aug. 26: The **Brothers Past** churn out improvisational rock and roll that's heavy on group interplay. Aug. 28: The ska-punk of New York City's own **Leftover Crack.**

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—Aug. 24-25: The **Polyphonic Spree.** Led by the former Tripping Daisy singer Tim DeLaughter, the Spree is a twenty-plus-member outfit from Dallas that favors relentlessly positive harmonizing and long flowing robes. Aug. 27: The impassioned Rastafarian reggae vocalist **Luciano.** Aug. 30: The **Lamb of God,** a death-metal band from Virginia.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Aug. 28: **Dan Bern** celebrates the release of his latest CD, "My Country II." (See This Week.)

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3055)—Aug. 30: Chicago's **OK Go** cranks out clever and exuberant guitar pop designed to move even the most jaded. With the **Quick,** featuring Royston Langdon of Spacehog.

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—Aug. 26: The mostly twenty-something girls in the local group **Palomar** give pop punk a good name with high vocals, solid rhythms, and much repetition. Aug. 29: The **Black Ox Orkestar** includes members of the sprawling Canadian collective Godspeed You! Black Emperor.

PIANOS
158 Ludlow St. (212-505-3733)—Aug. 30: Iceland's **Worm Is Green** traffics in cool electronica.

RODEO BAR
375 Third Ave., at 27th St. (212-683-6500)—Aug. 28: **Commander Cody** revs up the Hot Rod Lincoln. Aug. 30: The **Moonlighters** play classic swing from Hawaii.

ROTHKO
116 Suffolk St., at Rivington St. (212-475-7088)—Aug. 27: **Bad Wizard,** from Brooklyn by way of Georgia, recalls the most hedonistic moments of AC/DC and the more incendiary traits of the MC5. The **Witnesses** share similar predilections (with a bit more of a debt to New York's punk heritage) while jettisoning all semblance of hipster sophistication. Both bands go to great, sweaty lengths to restore rock and roll's bad name.

SIN-É
150 Attorney St. (212-388-0077)—Aug. 27: **Astaire** is the Brazilian-American brother-and-sister duo Bruce and Erica Driscoll. They favor sweet and sexy global pop.

S.O.B.'S
204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (212-243-4940)—Aug. 26: One of the original voices of righteous indignation, **Gil Scott-Heron** is back to preach revolution to the faithful.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—Aug. 25-28: The **Barry Harris** quintet. Most bop pianists approach their keyboards like racehorses, but Harris is a seducer with a satin touch.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Through Aug. 29: A suave double bill. The bassist **Ron Carter's** trio, which includes the guitarist **Russell Malone** and the pianist **Mulgrew Miller,** suggests the sleekness of the Modern Jazz Quartet. The singer **Freddy Cole** channels the subtle phrasing of his brother Nat while being his own man.

CHARLIE O'S TIMES SQUARE
1611 Broadway, at 49th St. (212-246-1960)—After some four years at the Cajun, a restaurant in Chelsea, **Vince Giordano** and his **Nighthawks Orchestra** have moved uptown. Manning the most unwieldy of instruments (bass, tuba, bass saxophone) as well as a bulbous vintage Kellogg microphone, Giordano leads a tuxedo-clad eleven-piece band whose ease with early jazz and swing breathes life into an overlooked era. They're here on Mondays and Tuesdays.

POP NOTES

REVOLUTION ROCK

Steve Earle, the Michael Moore of alternative country, ruffled feathers back in 2002 with "John Walker's Blues," an empathetic if not exactly sympathetic account of John Walker Lindh, the American-born convert to Islam who assisted the Taliban in Afghanistan. The song appeared on Earle's album "Jerusalem," and, while that album also contained the wrenching 9/11 meditation "Ashes to Ashes," the balance of the record was trademark Steve Earle: socially conscious rockers and lovesick ballads that drew on the best strains of classic rock and roll, from Buddy Holly to the Rolling Stones to Bruce Springsteen.

"The Revolution Starts Now" (E-Squared), Earle's new album, is less oblique about its aims. Even before the rollicking call to arms of the title song, there's an essay in the liner notes, penned by Earle, that explains the urgent circumstances of the album's creation: "All but two of these songs were recorded within 24 hours of the first line hitting the paper." Earle goes on to note that "democracy is hard work" and that "voting alone simply isn't enough." The lit fuse burns throughout the first half of the record, whether it's in the preachy but still poignant "Rich Man's War," the well-observed "The Gringo's Tale," the lubricious dance number "Condi, Condi" (in which Earle requests that the "sweet and dandy" National Security Adviser "shake [her] body"), or "F the CC," which requires little additional explanation. Earle likes to rant, and he's not much for finesse: everyone's either a corrupter or a victim of the corrupters, and the only hope lies in a far-flung populism that is as absurd as it is bracing. About halfway through, though, the jeremiad begins to lose some steam, and the topical rage gives way to a more general demonstration of craft. This is hardly a problem, aesthetically speaking—there's a pretty if pro-forma duet with Emmylou Harris and a defiantly vulnerable love song, "I Thought You Should Know," that's a small masterpiece—but it does make the final track, a reprise of the title song, feel like a bit of an afterthought.

—*Ben Greenman*

DANNY'S
346 W. 46th St. (212-265-8133)—Fifty years ago, no one sounded like **Blossom Dearie,** and today she's still the only one. Her wispy vocal instrument nails the sly lyrics of David Frishberg's "I'm Hip" and "My Attorney Bernie" and coaxes the bittersweet tinge out of "Bye Bye Country Boy." She's here on Saturdays and Sundays.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Through Aug. 29: The Soulbop band of the saxo-

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phonist **Bill Evans** and the trumpeter **Randy Brecker.** Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

LE JAZZ AU BAR
41 E. 58th St. (212-308-9455)—"Wild for You," the new album by the gifted vocalist **Karrin Allyson** (here through Sept. 5), is full of songs by Elton John, Carly Simon, Carole King, and other singer-songwriters from the seventies.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—**Miguel Zenon,** a promising alto saxophonist with a beguiling tone, makes a striking contribution to Charlie Haden's new album, "Land of the Sun." He leads a quartet here Aug. 24-25.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Aug. 25: The Chilean vocalist **Claudia Acuña** and her quartet. Aug. 31: The singer **Rebecca Martin** celebrates the release of her new CD, "People Behave Like Ballads."

SMOKE
2751 Broadway, between 105th and 106th Sts. (212-864-6662)—Aug. 27-28: A contingent of youngish players including the saxophonist **Chris Potter,** the trumpeter **Jim Rotondi,** and the pianist **Anthony Wonsey** celebrate Charlie Parker's birthday.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Through Sept. 5: The drummer **Paul Motian,** the guitarist **Bill Frisell,** and the saxophonist **Joe Lovano** have celebrated solo careers, but when they unite a special magic occurs, a marvel of group empathy. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-879-5500)—When Rodin was commissioned to sculpt Balzac, the writer had been dead for forty-one years. To model him, Rodin hired an unknown man from Tours, Balzac's birthplace. Jowly and merry-eyed, the resulting terra-cotta head is included in **"Artists' Artists,"** a gathering of portraits of and by artists. Picabia depicts Stieglitz as a stylized camera, and Jacques Villon imagines his brother Marcel Duchamp as a kind of " 'Nude Descending the Staircase' While Reading a Book." Larry Rivers, meanwhile, pictures John Ashbery as a homunculus floating in a cloud of words, the poet's own "Oleum Misericordiae." Through Nov. 7. ♦ **"Dangerous Liaisons: Fashion and Furniture in the Eighteenth Century."** Through Sept. 6. ♦ **"Ruhlmann: Genius of Art Deco."** Through Sept. 5. ♦ **"August Sander: People of the Twentieth Century, a Photographic Portrait of Germany."** Through Sept. 19. ♦ **"Childe Hassam, American Impressionist."** Through Sept. 12. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART (MOMA QNS)
33rd St. at Queens Blvd., Long Island City (212-708-9400)—For a two-part installation, **"Cut Outs"** and **"Suspended Seams,"** Jean Shin collected cast-off clothing from the MOMA staff. She sorted them by color, texture, and pattern and glued them to two facing walls in a homely, geometric mural. The ropy seams, stripped of their connective fabric, hang like nets from the ceiling. Through Sept. 27. ♦ **"Lee Bontecou: A Retrospective."** Through Sept. 27. ♦ **"Tall Buildings,"** a state-of-the-structure review of ambitious contemporary architecture. Through Sept. 27. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 10 to 5, and Friday evenings until 7:45.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—Somewhat lamely framing the Brancusi exhibition, **"Mondrian to Ryman: The Abstract Impulse"** concentrates on two representative generations of nonfigurative art. The best counterpoint to Brancusi in the first grouping—which includes Kandinskys, Klees, Moholy-Nagys, Arps, and Mondrians from the period before the First World War—are the clear plastic sculptures of the Constructivist Naum Gabo, which actually date from the nineteen-forties and fifties. The second segment—featuring Flavin, Judd, Serra, Andre, and other mid-century minimalist heroes—is notable for its emphasis on paired paintings by Agnes Martin, Brice Marden, and Robert Ryman, a nod to the (non-Brancusian) idea of serialism. Through Sept. 19. ♦ **"Constantin Brancusi: The Essence of Things."** Through Sept. 19. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)—The architecture firm LOT/EK has set up shop in a shipping container parked in the moat of the Breuer building. From the outside, the steel **"Mobile Dwelling Unit"** is unremarkable, aside from pop-out bays like those on an old-fashioned camper van. Inside, though, it's all red lacquer, black high-density foam, TV screens, computer monitors, surveillance cameras, and plywood shelving that pulls out from pockets in the walls. All that solar-powered electronica stretches the "low-tech" label, but it's fun to roll around on the bed and contemplate how the designs might be applied to a New York studio apartment. Through Sept. 19. ♦ **"Cotton Puffs, Q-Tips, Smoke and Mirrors: The Drawings of Ed Ruscha"** and **"Ed Ruscha and Photography"** are exhilarating shows. The first tracks the forty-five-year course—"development" does not apply to a talent that hit the ground running—of Ruscha's graphic adventures with words, signs, and strange materials (gunpowder, lettuce juice). The second combines rarely seen photographs, notably a prescient group of forty-four from a sojourn in Europe in 1961, with others that relate to the artist's influential books, which are on hand to be thumbed through. Once identified with Los Angeles, Ruscha's suave sorcery is now as global as air. Through Sept. 26. ♦ **"Ana Mendieta: Earth Body Sculpture and Performance 1972-1985."** Through Sept. 19. ♦ **"Evidence of Impact: Art and Photography 1963-1978."** Through Oct. 10. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—**"Frogs: A Chorus of Colors"** presents some two hundred frogs in glass-walled habitats. Through Jan. 9. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

AMERICAN FOLK ART MUSEUM
45 W. 53rd St. (212-265-1040)—**"Tools of Her Ministry: The Art of Sister Gertrude Morgan."** Through Oct. 10. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 7:30.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—**"The Living Room Candidate: Presidential Campaign Commercials 1952-2004"** is an online exhibition documenting more than two hundred and fifty television ads dating from the Eisenhower-Stevenson race to this year's Bush-Kerry contest. The exhibit can be seen online at www.livingroomcandidate.movingimage.us, or on the screens and monitors set up in the museum's café. (Wednesdays and Thursdays, noon to 5; Fridays, noon to 8; and Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6:30.)

JEWISH MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—**"Modigliani: Beyond the Myth."** Through Sept. 19. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45; Thursdays, 11 to 8; and Fridays, 11 to 3.)

NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN
Bronx River Parkway at Fordham Rd., the Bronx (718-817-8700)—The vast and lush grounds of the botanical garden, now deep in their late-summer abundance of daylilies, orchids, roses, and lavender, are twenty-two minutes from Grand Central on the Harlem local line. **"Waterlilies and Lotus: A Summer Aquatic Exhibition"** is back in the conservatory's courtyard for a second year. Blue-bodied dragonflies light on bulrushes and cattails, and the orange shadows of goldfish cruise by lilies with

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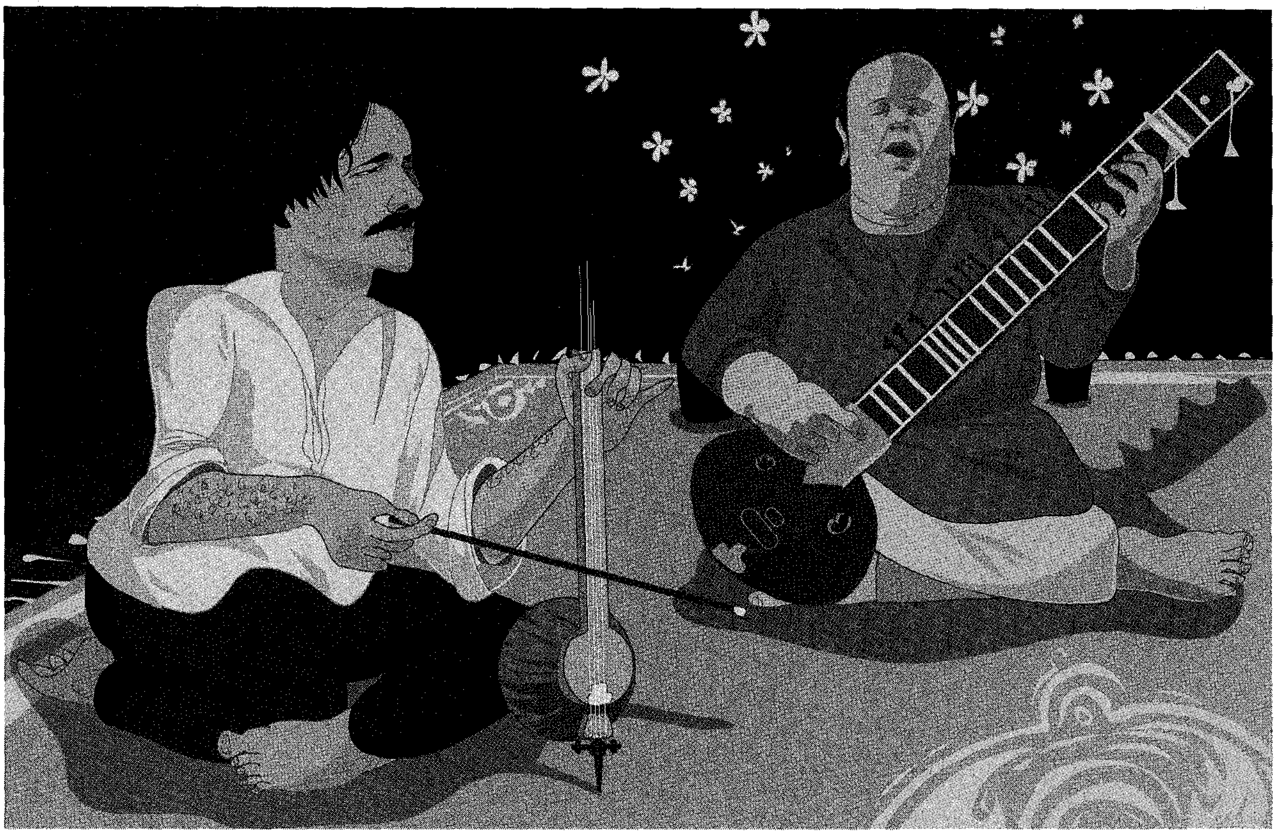
names like Wood's Blue Goddess, the Star of Siam, and the Prickly Waterlily, whose semi-submerged blossoms recall Audrey II from "Little Shop of Horrors." The star of the show, though, is the Giant Waterlily of the Amazon, a night-blooming behemoth whose pads can grow up to seven feet in diameter. The temperature inside its flowers can be eighteen degrees warmer than the surrounding air, drawing the attention of the beetles that pollinate and propagate them. Through Sept. 19. (Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6.)

P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER
22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—"I don't eat pork, but I take Ecstasy," murmurs the female protagonist of Maja Bajevic's video **"Step by Step."** Crouching in a starkly lit stone corridor, leaning in an arched doorway or window, the black-clad figure recites a litany of contradictory declaratives: "I go to church, I rape women. God is my witness." The piece is heavy-handed, but it has a pulsing, chiaroscuro rhythm that makes it interesting. A second installation consists of thirty stereos set out on the floor, each playing a pop song from a different country. Through Sept. 27. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, noon to 6.)



The world-music ensemble Ghazal performs as a prelude to Mozart's Requiem at Mostly Mozart on Aug. 27 (see Classical Music).

MAXIMILIAN BODE

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM
144 W. 125th St. (212-864-4500)—**"Seeds and Roots: Selections from the Permanent Collection,"** a ramble through the Studio Museum's growing collection, includes gems like Gary Simmons's "Lean/to" (2000), a pastel-on-vellum drawing of a shack blown thirty degrees off vertical by a gale wind; Bob Thompson's portentous 1959 painting of figures obscured by shadows at the edge of a forest; and Alison Saar's "Hootchie Coochie Gal," who shakes her painted rump inside an apothecary bottle. More than thirty pieces are on display, including work by Chris Ofili, Kerry James Marshall, Tracey Rose, and Sister Gertrude Morgan, almost all from the past half-century. The one exception is an 1804 oil portrait of a little white girl named Sarah Maria Coward; it's the work of Joshua Johnson, the first African-American to earn his living as an artist. Through Sept. 25. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Summer-hours warning: many galleries are open Mondays through Fridays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6. Others follow the normal Tuesday-to-Saturday schedule. It's best to call ahead.

SUE COE
In the traditions of agitprop and political caricature, Coe culls material from current events for her jagged drawings, which attack the plutocrats, tyrants, sycophants, and fools who trample anguished masses under their heels. It's an anachronistic visual rhetoric, but her new suite of eighteen drawings, collectively titled "Bully: Master of the Global Merry-Go-Round," delivers a dose of topical fury. A parasitic George W. Bush crawls from Dick Cheney's forehead; Richard Perle watches a bespectacled pig weep in a cell, surrounded by books with titles like "How to Profit from War"; nature scenes are swamped by scatological piles of Wal-Marts. Through Oct. 16. (Galerie St. Etienne, 24 W. 57th St. 212-245-6734.)

PIERO DORAZIO
The seventy-seven-year-old Italian painter and former Penn professor came to fame in the Ab Ex era, and his works continue to show the opposing instincts of that movement: restlessness and a tendency to work in series. Huge canvases filled with leaning parallelograms of bold colors have professorial names like "Le Jazz de Bouffon" and "Rosa, Rosae, . . . Rosarum" (from the Latin declension), but the work is saved from excessive experimental rigor by the softness of its variations. Through Aug. 27. (Moeller, 167 E. 73rd St. 212-988-4500.)

"BACK TO PAINT"
This summer grab bag survives its unexceptional thesis ("People are painting again") on the strength of a vivacious gang of big-thinking artists. Julie Mehretu, the headliner, paints in distinct layers, with stripes and boomerangs of pure color lying below and above a beige ground that's scribbled with architectural references and an orgy of ink marks. The effect is crisp and theatrical, with competing performances—sensual, historical, unhinged—expertly balanced by a strong directorial hand. The surprise is Marc Handelman, a recent art-school grad who depicts recognizable celestial effects—a pine tree caught in a corona, a quasar gleam in a nebula—with a strong vocabulary of expressionistic globs and swervy paint handling. Through Sept. 11. (C & M, 45 E. 78th St. 212-861-0020.)

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

ZILVINAS KEMPINAS
Seven industrial fans have been arranged in the center of the gallery to create a vortex of blasting air in which a thin loop of videotape is suspended. The tape rises and falls, moving in an undulating circle around the perimeter of the gallery, bouncing gently off the walls and floor. To enter the circle, visitors wait for the tape to rise and then duck under; it's a bit like playing jump rope. Once one is inside, not much happens. Videotape, which is facing obsolescence in the digital age, becomes a purely sculptural material, although one might imagine a soundtrack emerging from the drone of the fans. Through Aug. 31. (Spencer Brownstone, 39 Wooster St. 212-334-3455.)

"INNOCENCE FOUND"
A show in which dewy purity, put under close scrutiny, starts to look a bit rancid. Loretta Lux photographs a little girl in a princess-bride outfit with a faraway expression suggestive of bad things to come; in a suite of drawings by the Clayton brothers, feral-looking children dressed as Power Rangers are admonished to "be nice to animals." The sweet beasties fare no better: David Humphrey paints kittens who are inexplicably menaced by a loaf of white bread, and Tapp Francke's image of an earnest bull terrier is mutely tragic. Through Sept. 4. (DFN, 176 Franklin St. 212-334-3400.)

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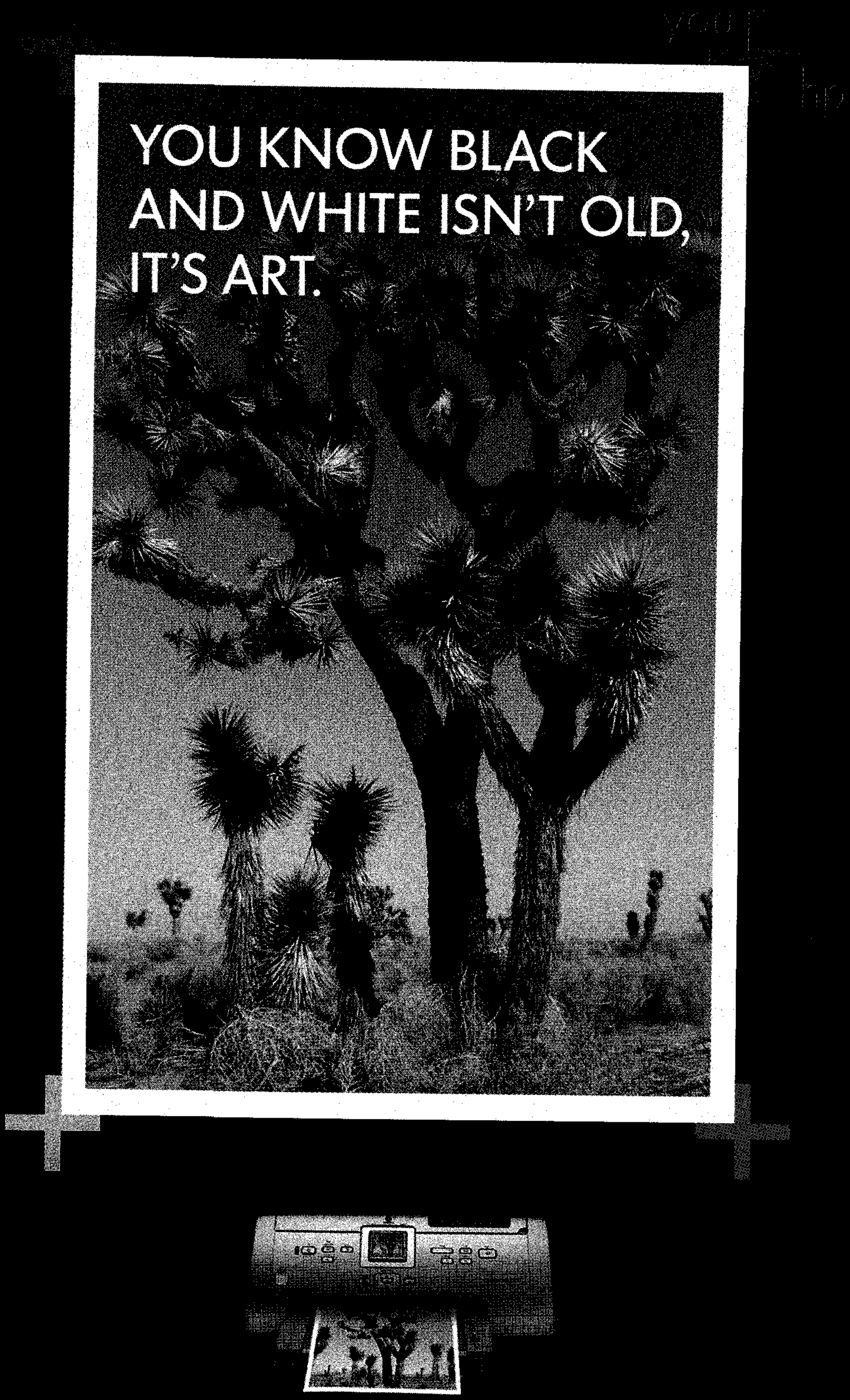
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"Venice, Italy" (from 1961), in "Ed Ruscha and Photography," at the Whitney (see Art).

Significant etchings include "The Goldweigher's Field" (1651), an early depiction of Holland's exceedingly flat landscape, and a 1652 sketch entitled "Christ Disputing with the Doctors." A group of unfinished works—notably "Artist Drawing from Model" (1639)—will interest those who enjoyed the recent exhibition at the Frick. Through Sept. 7. (Franklin Bowles, 431 West Broadway. 212-226-1616.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

RUDY BURCKHARDT
A small but moving show of art-world portraits and cityscapes taken between the thirties and the fifties by the Swiss-born filmmaker and photographer, who died in 1999. Pictures of New York City landmarks—the Flatiron Building, Astor Place—hang beside portraits of artists such as Willem and Elaine de Kooning, Jackson Pollack, and Mark Rothko. Through Sept. 11. (De Nagy, 724 Fifth Ave. 212-262-5050.)

CHIP HOOPER
Using a large-format view camera, Hooper takes extraordinarily detailed photographs of the interaction between water and light along the Pacific Ocean. In some pictures the waves roil and fog blocks out the sun, creating a virtually unified field of gray. In others, the sun on still water makes a block of light that falls in a hard line into the ocean. Through Sept. 18. (Mann, 210 Eleventh Ave. 212-989-7600.)

"150 YEARS OF PHOTOGRAPHY IN SPAIN"
A retrospective of Spanish photography, organized chronologically, from mid-nineteenth-century portraits of Gypsies and a sad-looking father holding his dead son (a typical memento mori of the time) to photojournalism documenting the shift to democracy in the seventies and more recent work (a nude by Toni Catany and a picture of a bored priest at an outdoor confession, by Christina García Rodero) that wouldn't have been allowed while Franco was in power. The best pictures cover the Spanish Civil War and the period ending with his death, in 1975. Much of this work seems to have been inspired by American and European innovators, but in some cases—Francisco Ontañón's wedding portrait from 1960, which brings Diane Arbus to mind—the Spaniards' photographs predate and equal the best work of the masters. Through Aug. 27. (Instituto Cervantes, 211 E. 49th St. 212-308-7720.)

"WOMEN OF MEXICO"
Black-and-white photographs by five female photographers who were inspired, in one way or another, by Manuel Alvarez Bravo. Lola Alvarez Bravo, with whom Mariana Yampolsky studied, was his wife; Flor Garduño and Graciela Iturbide were his assistants; and Marcela Taboada sits on the board of the Alvarez Bravo Photographic Center, in Oaxaca. Most of their subjects are indigenous Mexican women and girls. Iturbide's "Our Lady of the Iguanas," a famous image from 1979, in which a sturdy market woman poses with a crown of eight large lizards on her head, was made only after the photographer sold vegetables with her subject for days. Through Sept. 18. (Throckmorton, 145 E. 57th St. 212-223-1059.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY / ASIA SOCIETY
A show of recent photography and videos from China, "Between Past and Future," fills both museums with a hundred and thirty works by sixty young artists. The incredibly fast transformation of Chinese society is the central theme. Riffing on traditional Chinese scroll painting, Wang Qingsong places an officially denounced art critic at the center of his updating of the "Night Revels of Lao Li," from the tenth century. Wang Wei backlights a long line of color transparencies placed on the floor, portraits of himself underwater, forcing the viewer to walk across his face. Liu Zheng's black-and-white portraits of women mourning at a country funeral and masked revellers at a New Year's Eve party elegantly evoke the stark contrasts in the new China. Sze Tsung Leong's large color prints showing demolished traditional architecture are sad reflections on the country's manic race to build. Through Sept. 4. (International Center of Photography, 1133 Sixth Ave. 212-857-0000; Asia Society, 725 Park Ave. 212-288-6400.)

Short List

"DO"
Pace/MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 212-759-7999.
Through Aug. 31.

"DREAMWEAVERS"
Yancey Richardson, 535 W. 22nd St.
646-230-9610. Through Aug. 27.

CLASSICAL MUSIC
CONCERTS IN TOWN

MOSTLY MOZART FESTIVAL
Aug. 24-25 at 8: Bernard Labadie conducts the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra in a program of favorites by Haydn (the Symphony No. 103, "Drum Roll") and Beethoven (the Fourth Piano Concerto, with Garrick Ohlsson), along with a Mozart rarity (the Chaconne from "Idomeneo"). (Avery Fisher Hall.) ♦ Aug. 25 and Aug. 27-28 at 8: A selection of Mozart concert arias, choreographed by Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker. The sopranos are Patrizia Biccirè, Anke Hermann, and Olga Pasichnyk; Gregory Vadja conducts the Orchestra of St. Luke's. (See This Week.) (LaGuardia Concert Hall, Amsterdam Ave. at 65th St.) ♦ Aug. 26 at 8: The tenor Christoph Prégardien teams up with the pianist Dennis Helmrich in a program of songs by Mozart (including "An Chloe"), Beethoven, and Schumann ("Dichterliebe"). (Alice Tully Hall.) ♦ Aug. 27 at 8: If any program encapsulates the creative tensions involved in keeping this inherently conservative festival fresh, it's this one. When Louis Langrée, the festival's music director, heard "The Rain," a recording of improvisational works by the Persian-Indian music group Ghazal, he was struck by how the opening track reminded him of a passage from Mozart's Requiem—so he decided to bring both works together in one concert. Ghazal (which features Kayhan Kalhor, a renowned virtuoso of the *kamancheh*, a Persian fiddle) performs selections from the Grammy-nominated recording in the first half; a complete performance of the Requiem follows, with the singers Lisa Milne, Jill Grove, Christoph Prégardien, and Nathan Berg joining Langrée, the Riverside Choral Society, and the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra. (Avery Fisher Hall.) ♦ Aug. 28 at 8: The festival's final concert of the season reverts to form, with the Requiem preceded by a performance of Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 25 in C Major (with Jeffrey Kahane). (212-721-6500.)

NON SEQUITUR 2004: "ADDICTIONS"
The annual multidisciplinary mini-festival of words and music, curated by Regie Cabico and Jed Distler, débuts a collection of new collaborative works on obsessive themes. Randall Woolf and Beata Moon, two of the featured composers, have created works with, respectively, the poets Elena Georgiou and Sanjana Nair. (Flea Theatre, 41 White St. 212-663-1967. Aug. 24-26 at 8.)

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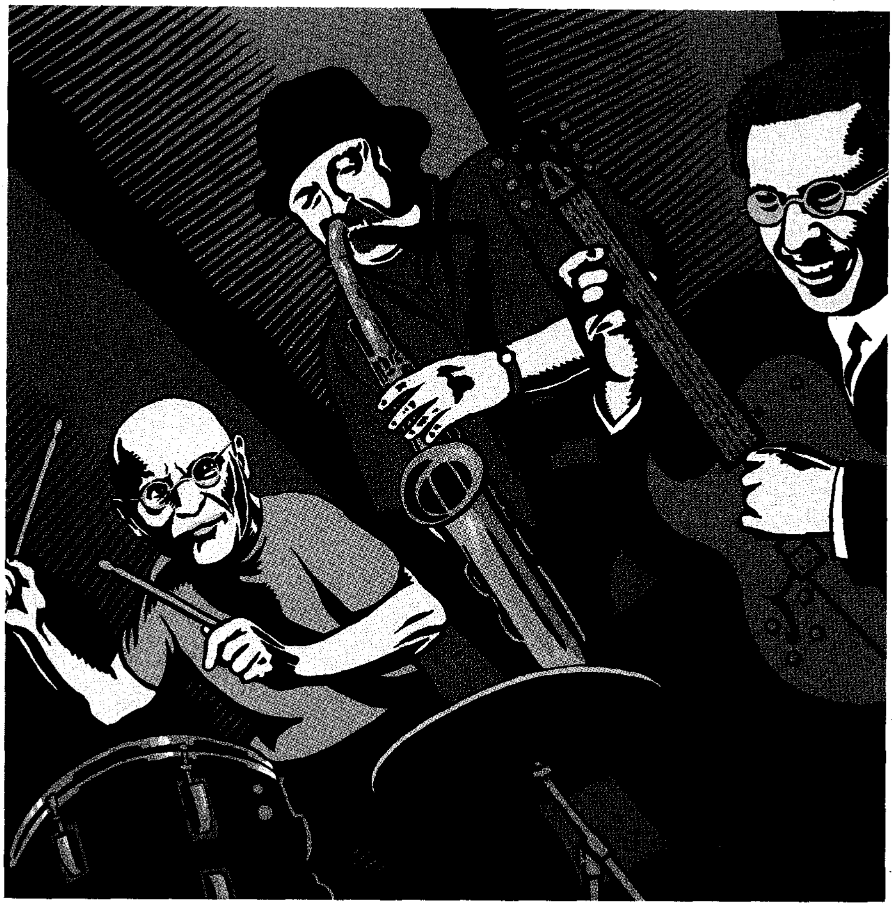


Paul Motian, Joe Lovano, and Bill Frisell, at the Village Vanguard (see Night Life).

MICHAEL KUPPERMAN

BARGEMUSIC
Aug. 26 at 7:30: The Urban Brass Quintet performs selections by Bach (from "The Art of Fugue"), Debussy (in transcriptions by William Owens, one of the group's trumpeters), Gesualdo, Guami, and Bruce Adolphe ("Triskelion"). ♦ Aug. 27 at 7:30: Randall Hodgkinson, a returning favorite at the barge, offers a comfort-food evening of music by Schubert (the "Moments Musicaux"), Ravel, and Schumann ("Carnaval"). ♦ Aug. 28 at 7:30 and Aug. 29 at 4: Three musicians—the violinist Mark Peskanov, the cellist Steuart Pincombe, and the pianist Jeffrey Biegel—split off and recombine for trios by Haydn and Shostakovich (No. 2, in E Minor), piano works by Chopin, and Bach's Suite No. 6 for Solo Cello. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

ACCORDION MASTER CLASS AND CONCERT SERIES
At the end of August, the music season's quietest time, straitlaced classical players clear the field and downtown fiends come out to play. William Schimmel, an accordionist with a Juilliard doctorate, is prominent among them. He celebrates the tenth anniversary of his series with a round of events under the theme "No-Id-Rocca" (for the palindromically impaired, that's "accordion" spelled backward). Discussion topics will include "Atonal Music and the Collective Unconscious" and "What Is This Thing Called the Accordion?" Schimmel and his dexterous colleagues perform original and transcribed works by such composers as Robert McMahan, José Serebrier, Schimmel, and George Gershwin ("Rhapsody in Blue"). (Tenri Cultural Institute, 43 W. 13th St. 212-876-0827. Aug. 27-29, with master classes at 3 and concerts at 7.)

AVIAN MUSIC: "PHOTO-OP"
Conrad Cummings's post-minimalist music-theatre piece (with lyrics by James Siena), which had its première at La Mama in 1992, gets a return engagement from Peter Flint's offbeat downtown collective, just in time for the Republican National Convention. In a cheeky move, the company is offering discount tickets to those presenting convention-floor credentials; conservatives are unlikely to be amused by the work's po-faced, Brechtian stance, in which two singer-candidates gradually reveal the hidden thoughts behind their vaguely sinister sound bites ("Let's never give up on more jails for more criminals"). (Cornelia Street Café, 29 Cornelia St. Aug. 30 at 6:30 and 8:30. Tickets at the door.)

OUT OF TOWN

TANGLEWOOD
Aug. 25 at 8:30: Martha Argerich, a keen follower of young talent, joins her protégé Alexander Gurning (making his Tanglewood debut, at Ozawa Hall) in a two-piano program that includes Prokofiev's Suite from his ballet "Cinderella." ♦ Aug. 27 at 8:30: Argerich brings Gurning to the Shed for a performance of Poulenc's impudent Concerto for Two Pianos with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, then goes it alone in Ravel's limpid Concerto in G Major. Charles Dutoit, the conductor, also leads Mozart's "Haffner" Symphony and Stravinsky's "Firebird" Suite (the 1919 version). ♦ Aug. 28 at 8:30: Dutoit and the B.S.O. return for more Ravel ("La Valse") and Stravinsky ("Petrushka," this time, in the 1947 version) as well as Beethoven's Violin Concerto (with Itzhak Perlman as special guest). ♦ Aug. 29 at 2:30: The festival's grand finale, a performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Hans Graf conducts the B.S.O. and the Tanglewood Festival Chorus; Measha Brueggergosman, Mary Phillips, Gordon Gietz, and Raymond Aceto are the vocal soloists. (Lenox, Mass. 888-266-1200.)

CHESTNUT HILL CONCERTS
The cellist Ronald Thomas's summer series, commemorating the centenary of Antonín Dvořák's death, closes its season with a program combining the composer's String Sextet in A Major with works by Piston and Beethoven (the String Trio in C Minor, Op. 9, No. 3). Cynthia Phelps and Robert Rinehart, violists in the New York Philharmonic, are among the featured musicians. (First Congregational Church, Madison, Conn. 203-245-5736. Aug. 27 at 8.)

WOODSTOCK FRINGE FESTIVAL 2004: "AMERICAN SONGFEST"
Larry Alan Smith, the former dean of the Hartt School of Music and a respected composer of songs, heads up the classical section of the Byrdcliffe artist colony's theatrical series. It begins with "Vive la Boulangerie!," in which the soprano Nancy Loesch sings music by Copland, Blitzstein, Smith, and other students of the megapedagogue Nadia Boulanger. (St. Gregory's Church, Woodstock, N.Y. 845-679-0167. Aug. 28 at 2.)

LUCIANO PAVAROTTI INTERNATIONAL FAREWELL TOUR
Still haven't got enough of him? Your last chance may come at the PNC Bank Arts Center, which will present the tenor (with his longtime accompanist and conductor, Leone Magiera) in a performance of songs and arias by Donizetti, Bellini, Puccini, and others. The soprano Carmela Remigio is his guest. (Holmdel, N.J. 212-307-7171. Aug. 28 at 8.)

TANNERY POND CONCERTS
The young Russian pianist Vassily Primakov offers a program of works, tender and volatile by turns, by Schubert (the Four Impromptus, Op. 90), Fauré, Ravel ("La Valse"), Glazunov (the Sonata No. 1 in B-Flat Minor), and Philip Glass (a suite from the music for the film "The Hours"). (Darrow School, New Lebanon, N.Y. 888-846-5848. Aug. 28 at 8.)

WINDHAM CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL
The all-female Lark Quartet, a string group that often turns its energies to contemporary composers, offers a traditional program of works by Beethoven (the "Grosse Fuge"), Ravel, and Franck (the Piano Quintet, with a longtime friend, Jon Klibonoff). (Windham Performing Arts Center, Windham, N.Y. 518-734-6378. Aug. 28 at 8.)

MAVERICK CONCERTS
Aug. 28 at 8: The Dorian Wind Quintet, a rare exception to the woodland festival's steady offering of strings, performs music by Bach, George Perle (the Wind Quintet No. 1), Barber (the evergreen "Summer Music"), and Dvořák (a wind arrangement of the String Quartet in E-Flat Major, Op. 51). ♦ Aug. 29 at 3: The American String Quartet, an elegant and commanding ensemble celebrating its thirtieth anniversary, offers quartets by Mozart (in D Major, K. 575), Dvořák (the "American"), and Ned Rorem (the Third Quartet, performed in honor of the composer's eightieth-birthday season). (Woodstock, N.Y. For more information, call 845-679-8217.)

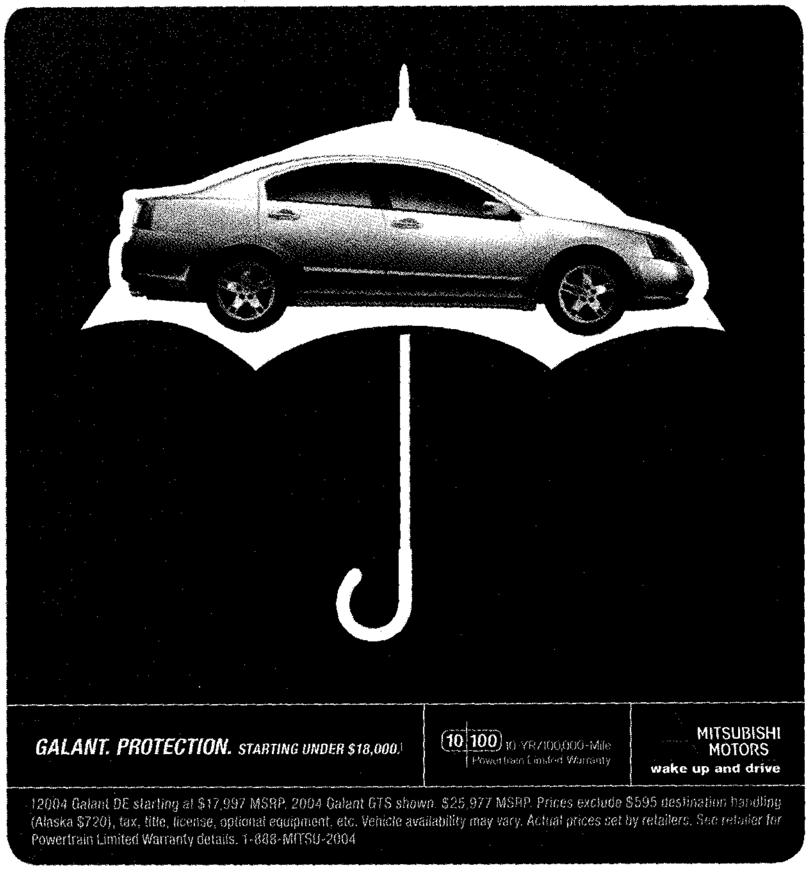
MUSIC MOUNTAIN
The Shanghai String Quartet completes its summer-long survey of the Beethoven quartets, performing the Quartets in B-Flat Major, Op. 18, No. 6, in F Major, Op. 135, and the "Grosse Fuge," Op. 133. (Routes 63 and 126, Falls Village, Conn. 860-824-7126. Aug. 29 at 3.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

"LA CASITA: A HOME FOR THE HEART"
The "Lincoln Center Out of Doors" festival presents two afternoons of poetry, storytelling, music, art, and dance from Latino, Caribbean, and African cultures. The performers include Pa'lo Monte, Carmelita Tropicana, Grupo Norteño, and Juan Lázaro Méndolas. (North Plaza. Aug. 28-29, from 1:30-5:30. For more information, call 212-875-5766.)

IMAGINE FESTIVAL OF ARTS, ISSUES & IDEAS
This six-day gathering is set to coincide with the Republican National Convention, and it features more than a hundred different events, including theatre, readings, art shows, and concerts all around New York City. (See also Dance.) (Aug. 28-Sept. 2. For more information, visit www.imagine04.org.)

MORE READINGS
Aug. 25 at 7: Yongsoo Park and Louise Wareham offer passages from their respective novels, "Las Cucarachas" and "Since You Ask." (Barnes & Noble, 106 Court St., Brooklyn. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Aug. 30 at 8: Zev Borow, Neil Chamberlain, Peter Ferland, and others read from their contributions to "Created in Darkness by Troubled Americans," a new anthology of humor writing from *McSweeney's*. (826NYC, 372 Fifth Ave., Park Slope, Brooklyn. 718-499-9884.)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MOVIES OPENING

ANACONDAS: THE HUNT FOR THE BLOOD ORCHID
In a horror-action film directed by Dwight H. Little, a group of adventurers search for a fabled orchid in the jungles of Borneo. Opening Aug. 27.

BANG RAJAN
Thanit Jitnukul directed this historical epic based on the true story of a group of Siamese villagers who resisted the Burmese invasion. In Thai. Opening Aug. 27. (Quad Cinemas.)

BRIGHT LEAVES
A new documentary by Ross McElwee, in which he investigates his North Carolina family's tobacco-growing past. Opening Aug. 25. (Film Forum.)

THE BROWN BUNNY
Vincent Gallo wrote and directed this road-trip movie, in which he plays a lovesick motorcycle racer travelling from New Hampshire to California. With Chloë Sevigny. Opening Aug. 27. (Sunshine Cinema.)

BUSH'S BRAIN
A documentary about the political strategist Karl Rove, based on the book by James Moore and Wayne Slater. Directed by Joseph Mealy and Michael Paradies Shoob. Opening Aug. 27. (Cinema Village and Sutton 1 and 2.)

HERO
Zhang Yimou directed this "Rashomon"-like epic about a Chinese warrior (Jet Li) who joins a plot to assassinate the emperor. With Zhang Ziyi, Maggie Cheung, and Tony Leung Chiu Wai. In Mandarin. Opening Aug. 27.

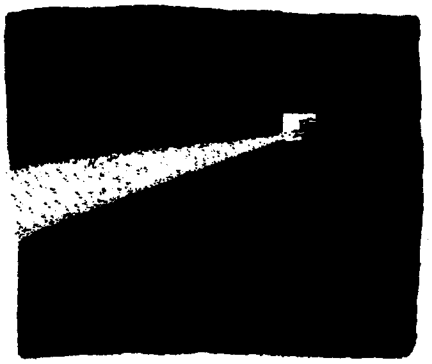
SUPERBABIES: BABY GENIUSES 2
A baby with special powers helps out other toddlers, in a comedy sequel directed by Bob Clark. With Jon Voight and Scott Baio. Opening Aug. 27.

SUSPECT ZERO
E. Elias Merhige directed this thriller, in which a serial killer seems to be tracking down and killing other serial killers. With Ben Kingsley, Carrie-Anne Moss, and Aaron Eckhart. Opening Aug. 27.

FILM NOTES

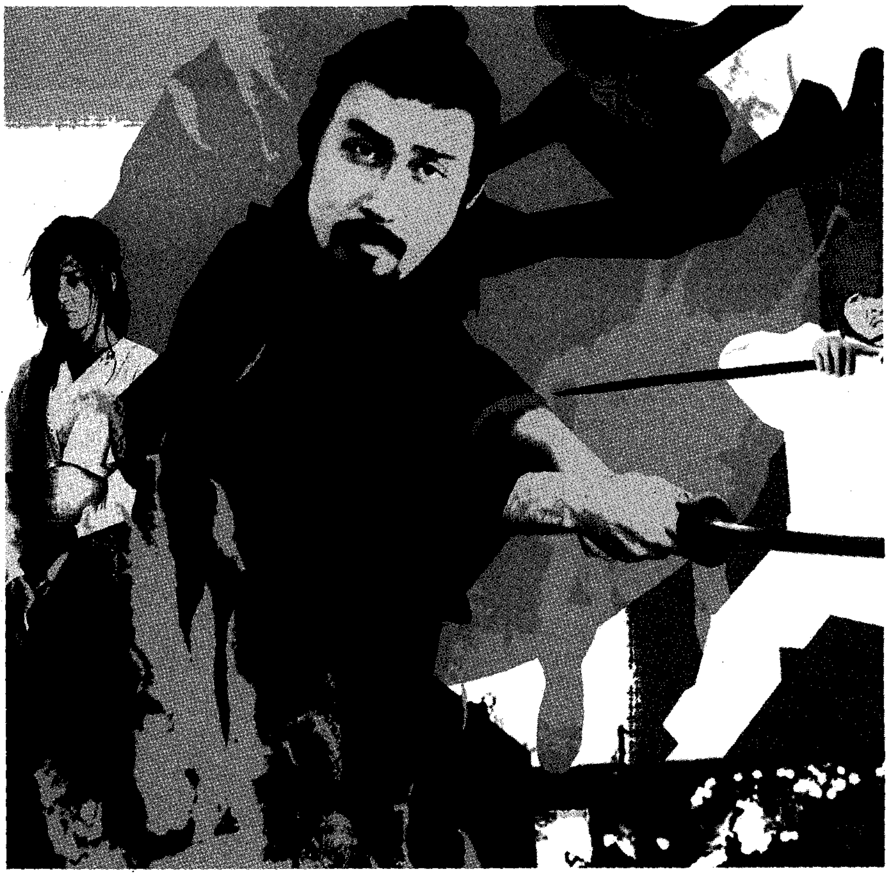
ALIEN VS. PREDATOR
Twentieth Century Fox goes for the quick bucks with a franchise-damaging rip-off. Directed with monstrous incompetence by Paul W. S. Anderson, this counterfeit sci-fi adventure about an ancient pyramid that provokes a showdown between the two classic movie aliens should have been acid-slinging fun. Instead there's endlessly boring exposition, by-the-book characters, and dimly lit set pieces that mask the low-end production budget. Fans will shed a tear when they see how the frightening and wondrous alien designs by Stan Winston and H. R. Giger are thrown around like so much garbage.—*Bruce Diones* (Battery Park 11, Chelsea West, East 85th Street, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

THE BOURNE SUPREMACY
Fast, faster, and fastest—that's the way the cutting rate goes in this sequel to "The Bourne Identity." The director, Paul Greengrass, jumps ahead within scenes, then jumps again. Greengrass is like a man breathing so fast that he never draws much oxygen into his lungs. Yet, of its kind, "The Bourne Supremacy" is incredibly skilled. Greengrass arranges pursuits and escapes that fly like arrows. He tears up staid old Moscow in a car chase and turns routine C.I.A. procedural stuff—people looking at computer screens and barking code names and other gibberish at each other—into nerve-racking contests of will. The movie is stripped down for action, and its hero—the survivor of a botched operation who suffers from amnesia—has no identity beyond his superlative physical skills and a vague sense of guilt. Harried, chased, both hunted and hunter, the blunt-nosed Matt Damon is a superhero reduced to pure reflex, yet, by means of his isolation and his stoicism, he becomes almost a romantic figure. Set in Goa, Naples, Berlin, Moscow, and, should you blink, perhaps Madagascar and Sardinia, too. With Joan Allen, Brian Cox, Julia Stiles, and Franke Potente. Adapted by Tony Gilroy from a Robert Ludlum novel.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 8/9 & 16/04.) (Battery Park 11, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)



BRIGHT YOUNG THINGS
Evelyn Waugh's early satirical novel "Vile Bodies" has a special brittleness that makes it unique in fiction. The young, upper-class London socialites—the Throbbings and Miles Malpractice and the rest—strike attitudes, rattle on without ever saying what they mean, fall in and out of ridiculous scrapes, and party, party, party. The trouble is, one cannot photograph Waugh's prose, which has the slender, hard clarity of a bitter lyric poem. Stephen Fry's adaptation of the book lays on a heavy dose of period production design and whirls about madly, and, here and there, the actors have funny or touching moments, especially Fenella Woolgar, who plays the daft Agatha Runcible ("too, too shaming"). But mostly the movie feels overwrought and insubstantial. One looks at a handsome young stage actor like Stephen Campbell Moore, who, as the hero, Adam Fenwick-Symes, has penetrating eyes, and one thinks, Why is this fine-looking young man behaving in such a feckless and stupid way? With Emily Mortimer, Michael Sheen, James McAvoy, Jim Broadbent, Dan Aykroyd as a bellowing Canadian press lord, and Stockard Channing as the American revivalist, Mrs. Melrose Ape.—*D.D.* (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, and Cinema 2.)

COLLATERAL
Tom Cruise as an assassin in a silver-gray suit shows up in Los Angeles at dawn and expects to leave at dusk. His job: to eliminate five witnesses in an impending federal prosecution of a drug cartel. He bullies a sweet-tempered taxi-driver, one Max Durocher (Jamie Foxx), into providing transportation all through the night, and "Collateral" turns into a kind of convoluted buddy movie, in which the two men engage in a weird, terse dialogue about murder. The plot of "Collateral," which was directed by Michael Mann, is just a movie-ish contrivance, and the violence is no more than thuggishly casual and chic—that is, very enjoyable. But shot by shot, scene by scene, Mann may be the best director in Hollywood. Methodical and precise, he analyzes a scene into minute components—a door closing, an arm thrust out—and gathers the fragments into seamless units; he wants you to live inside the physical event, not just experience the sensation of it. "Collateral" comes off like clockwork, but it's a clock that breathes—great actors like Mark Ruffalo, Javier Bardem, and Barry Shabaka Henley have sustained, intricate moments in the pauses between the violent acts. With Jada Pinkett Smith. Written by Stuart Beattie. Shot largely with digital cameras by Dion Beebe and Paul Cameron.—*D.D.* (8/9 & 16/04) (Battery Park 11, Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Ziegfeld.)



Opening September 3, "Warriors of Heaven and Earth," directed by He Ping.

JOHN RITTER

FAHRENHEIT 9/11
Michael Moore's new documentary is an incendiary and viciously funny attack on the Bush Administration—a whirlwind of political charges, sinister

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implications, and derision—in which the President comes off as a betrayer and fool who has all the substance of a stuffed doll. Moore accuses Bush of handing part of America's sovereignty over to the Saudis; he implies that the President, after 9/11, was more effective at frightening the electorate than at pursuing the terrorists; he presents America as an oligarchy in which the wealthy control everything while luring the dispossessed to "volunteer" in endless wars. Saying that pieces of this are true, or partly true, or true when joined to counterclaims—isn't the Army mostly a boon for the working class?—doesn't settle the journalistic issue. The movie's more radical allegations, which arrive like a shower of poison darts, are impossible to sort out and evaluate, and Moore often joins facetious narration to highly edited clips in a way that recalls the agitprop techniques of dictatorial regimes. The movie is sensational entertainment for those already convinced but may repel the uncommitted. There are a number of powerful sections, however, that are impossible to dismiss, particularly the story of Lila Lipscomb, a Flint, Michigan, mother who loses her son in the Iraq war and, giving way to unappeasable grief, makes a half-crazed pilgrimage to the White House.—*D.D.* (6/28/04) (East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

GARDEN STATE

Andrew Largeman (Zach Braff), a struggling actor, arrives in his native New Jersey with some extra baggage: his paraplegic mother has possibly committed suicide, he's been on Zoloft since forever, and his one major acting credit is as a retarded quarterback. This would be a difficult burden for any young man, let alone a début movie. But Braff, who also wrote and directed, keeps the tone light with some funny homecoming scenes. There's a party where Large is greeted as "Jersey's De Niro," a run-in with a high-school friend turned cop, and, like a winning bass line, the smirking wit of his stoner friend Mark (Peter Sarsgaard). The movie is also lifted by the presence of Natalie Portman, perhaps the ultimate ethereal home-town girl. Braff eventually takes the movie to emotional places where only the extremely tenderhearted will follow, but there are a lot of nice moments that resonate, and a soundtrack of moody, interior music.—*Michael Agger* (Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

HAROLD & KUMAR GO TO WHITE CASTLE

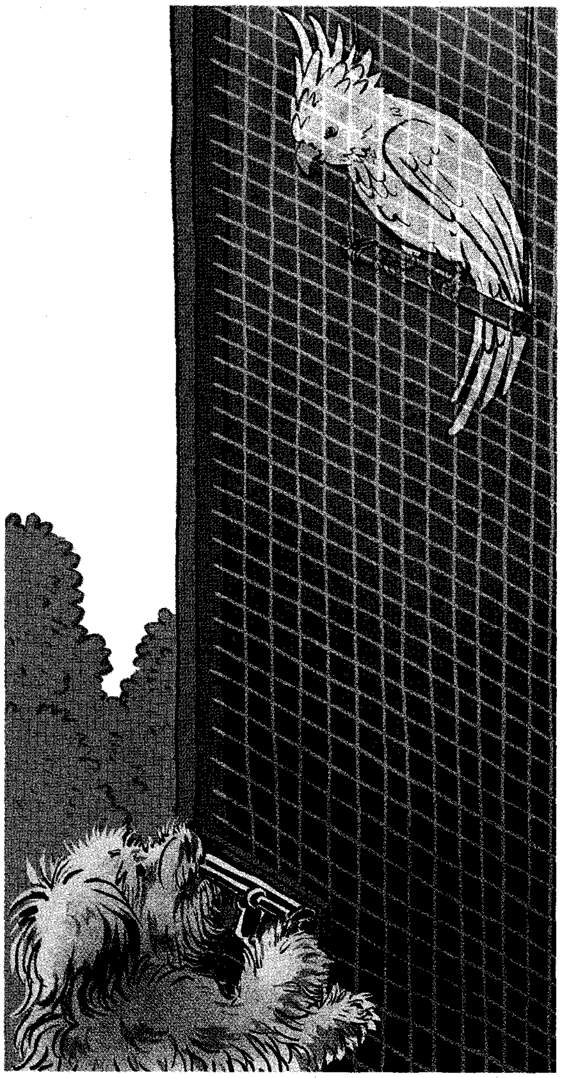
A stoner comedy starring "persons of colors." Harold (John Cho) is a Korean investment banker, and his best friend, Kumar (Kal Penn), is a South Asian slacker avoiding medical school. The talky script presents white people as an ethnic group like any other, worthy of mockery (extreme-sports guys) and praise (John Hughes movies). Despite that innovation, Harold and Kumar encounter the usual teen-movie setups, right down to the encounter with the faded television celebrity (Neil Patrick Harris, a.k.a. Doogie Howser, M.D.). The movie is worth seeing for its manhandling of political correctness and Penn's irreverent charisma—just don't expect a revolution.—*M.A.* (Battery Park 11, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

I, ROBOT

It's Will Smith versus the machines in this extremely loose adaptation of a series of Isaac Asimov stories. Directed by the fantasist Alex Proyas ("Dark City," "The Crow"), the movie is a C.G.I. extravaganza, full of gleaming surfaces and moody lighting in the manner of Edward Hopper. The robots themselves have beautiful ice-blue eyes, and the Chicago cityscapes have a "Blade Runner"-like intricacy. The studly Smith (he has a swoon-inducing shower scene) suspects that one of the latest models of a new robot line has committed murder, and the plot becomes a succession of chases that are progressively exciting. There's not much in the way of clever dialogue (the dreaded Akiva Goldsman had a hand in the script), but Proyas has a real facility for this kind of speculative storytelling.—*B.D.* (Battery Park 11, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE

The famous original, from 1962, written by George Axelrod, from a Richard Condon novel, and directed by John Frankenheimer, was a satire of Cold War anxieties that cut both ways, attacking both the far right and the far left. Acidulous and brazenly absurd, the movie was a one-of-a-kind mainstream picture, with startling oddities that people talked about for years. This updated version, written by Daniel Pyne and Dean Georgias and directed by Jonathan Demme, is doggedly, wretchedly earnest. A shadowy big company reminiscent of Halliburton or the Carlyle Group attempts to take over the White House by placing a computer chip in the brain of a war hero turned congressman (Liev Shreiber) who is under the control of his reactionary mother (Meryl Streep), a senator unaccountably made up to look like Hillary Clinton. What was satire of paranoia in the old movie has been turned into just plain paranoia. The bad memories of the hero (Denzel Washington), who suspects that the war hero is a fake, are accompanied by the conventional horror-film frights of painted faces, spooky doctors, and smoky, distorted cinematography. The movie is overwrought and unfocussed, and there isn't a joke in it anywhere.—*D.D.* (8/9 & 16/04) (Battery Park 11, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Twin, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)



Benji returns in "Benji: Off the Leash!"

YUKO SHIMIZU

MARIA FULL OF GRACE

In this superbly poised independent film, Maria (Catalina Sandino Moreno), a willful seventeen-year-old, unhappily pregnant and stuck in a factory job, agrees to serve as a "mule," carrying in her stomach little pellets of heroin from her native Colombia to New Jersey. Joshua Marston, a thirty-five-year-old N.Y.U. film-school graduate, nosed around Colombia and New York's immigrant neighborhoods before beginning to shoot "Maria," his first full-length feature, and the way he dramatized the material seems instinctively right: he goes step by step, detail by detail, emotion by emotion, eliding nothing, exaggerating nothing. In his calm and lucid way, Marston has made one of the emblematic coming-to-America stories of our time.—*D.D.* (7/26/04) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Sunshine Cinema.)

MOTHRA

Agreeable kiddie camp for sci-fi-oriented kiddies—and semi-educational, too! After all, this bit of froth in the wave of Japanese creature features shows us the title character in all four developmental stages. After hatching from an egg on a radioactive Polynesian island named Beiru (filled with Japanese extras playing natives in purplish brownface), a giant caterpillar swims to Tokyo to rescue Beiru's two tiny, telepathic fairy princesses from an unsavory international entrepreneur who puts them on theatrical display. After a brief pupal phase spent attached to a tower that resembles a poor man's Eiffel, the moth emerges and flies to an America-like superpower called Rolithica, where the villain, a Rolithican himself, has tried to escape with his precious little "peanuts." The special-effects scenes feature remote-controlled toy tanks with soldier figurines in the drivers' seats, and Mothra, though it became a beloved monster, seems pasted together from carpet samples and kitchen-sink filters. But the movie's wackiness and innocence make it passable fun for post-nuclear families. From Ishiro Honda, the director of "Godzilla." Originally released in 1961.—*Michael Sragow* (Film Forum; Aug. 29-30.)

OPEN WATER

Chris Kentis's expertly made thriller is about a yuppie couple stranded in the Caribbean after they are mistakenly abandoned on a scuba-diving excursion. The handheld-camera work (by Laura Lau) and no-budget ocean settings combine for an unflinchingly realistic ordeal. Kentis drifts his two more-than-game actors (Blanchard Ryan and Daniel Travis) farther and farther out to sea, into shark-infested waters, and the suspenseful, anything-can-happen moments are unrelenting. There's a sublime indifference to suffering in this film that a viewer will find terrifying, stomach-churning, and somehow pleasant.—*B.D.* (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, and Lincoln Square.)

THE PRINCESS DIARIES 2: ROYAL ENGAGEMENT

Anne Hathaway, Julie Andrews, and the director Garry Marshall reteam for a sequel to their 2001 hit. The royal princess (Hathaway), with the help of her hip yet proper grandmother (Andrews), needs to find an eligible man in order to attain her throne. There's the usual tangle of suitors, a kind of genial madcap that Marshall directs in his efficient sitcom style and a set design—pure Barbie-doll dream house—that gives the film a should-have-been-direct-to-video charm.—*B.D.* (Battery Park 11, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, and Union Square.)

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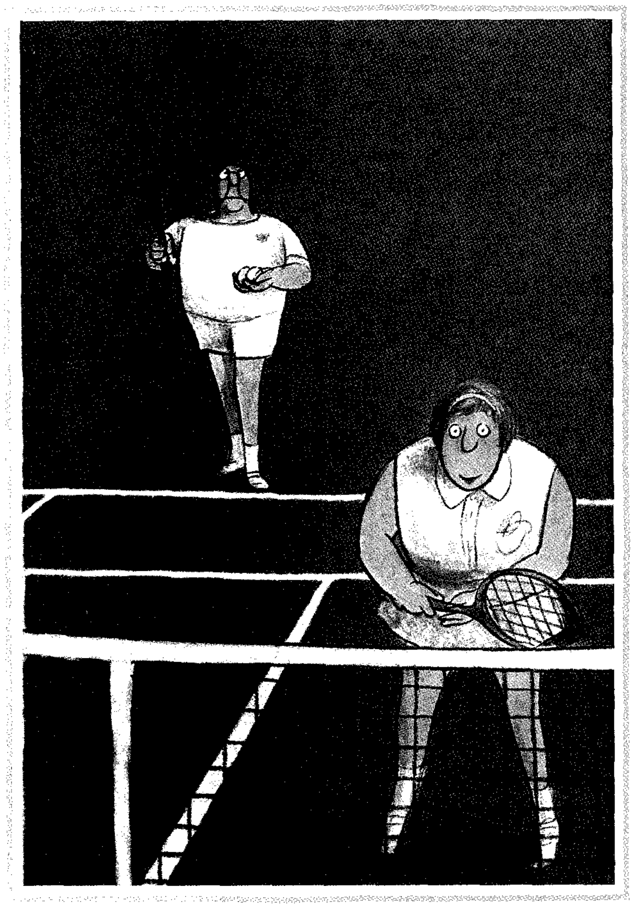

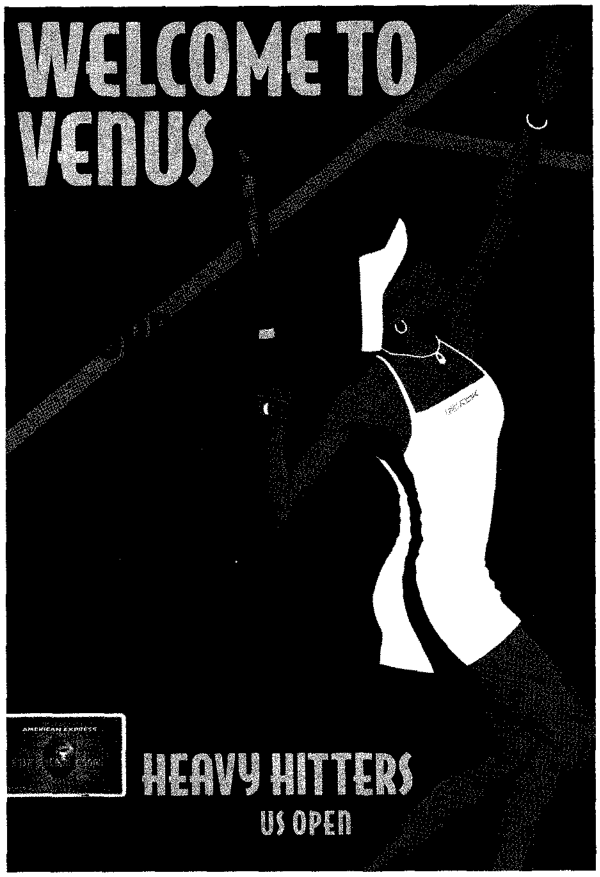
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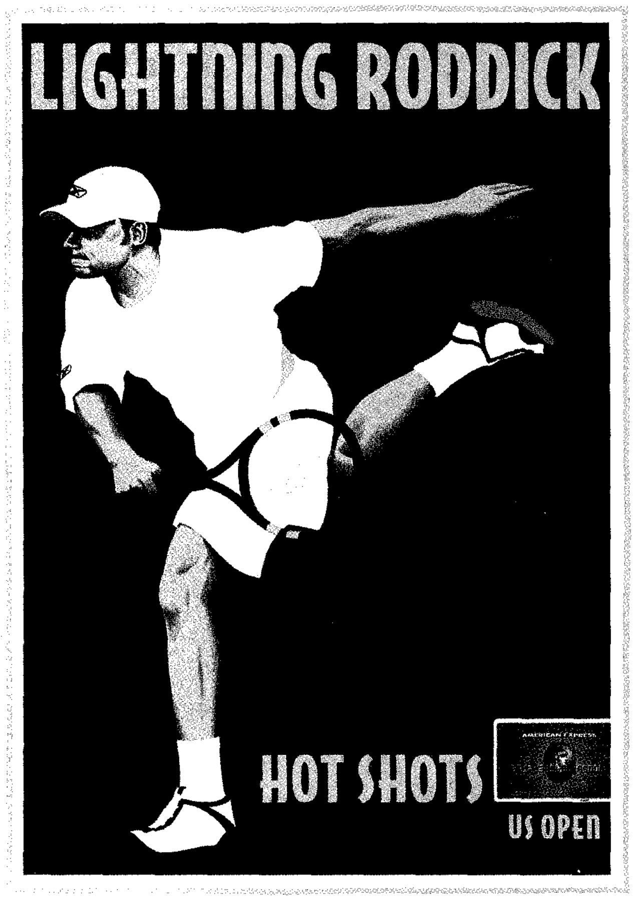
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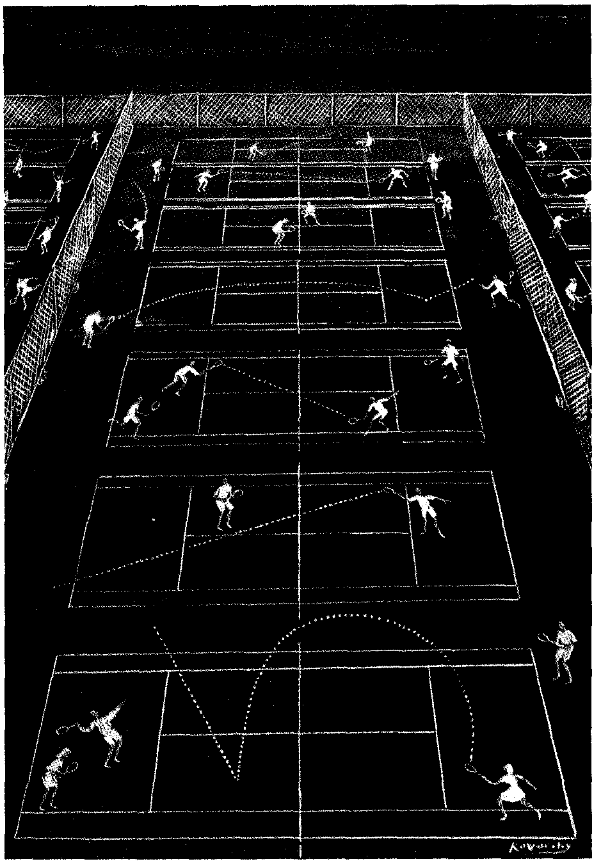

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SHE HATE ME

The frenzied new film from Spike Lee, who is appalled and aroused to a new and bewildering degree. We start amid financial scandal, as Jack Armstrong (Anthony Mackie) gets fired from a pharmaceutical company for leaking details of its mismanagement. That promising topic is, however, speedily left behind, as Jack turns, without warning, to the lucrative trade of sperm donation; to be specific, he impregnates professional lesbians for at least five thousand bucks a pop. The movie unstintingly applauds such heavy industry, even morphing into animation for the depiction of our hero's eager sperm; add the spurious departure into Mafia land (complete with a miscast John Turturro), plus a maladroit flashback to the Watergate break-in, and what we wind up with is explicable only as collage—a bright, multifarious jamming together of racial wrath and horny celebration, better known as a complete mess. Perhaps, in an election year, you need to make this much noise to be heard. With Monica Bellucci, Woody Harrelson, Brian Dennehy, and a dirty-mouthed Ellen Barkin.—*Anthony Lane* (8/2/04) (Empire 25.)

STANDER

Tom Jane is terrific as the South African folk hero Andre Stander, a Johannesburg police captain turned criminal, who robbed banks as a means of protesting apartheid in the nineteen-seventies. The director Bronwen Hughes vividly re-creates the period and the crimes, and she exploits Jane's well-muscled physique to create a seductive lone-wolf aura. True-life dramas like this one usually raise more questions than they answer, but the movie is enjoyable as a portrait of an audacious rogue.—*B.D.* (Chelsea Cinemas.)

TWO-LANE BLACKTOP

An "On the Road" with drag racers, starring James Taylor and the Beach Boys' Dennis Wilson as a laconic team known only as, respectively, "the Driver" and "the Mechanic." Laurie Bird is a rambling gal known only as "the Girl" and Warren Oates is the enigmatic G.T.O., who, of course, drives a GTO. When he crosses paths once too often with Taylor and Wilson's customized 1955 Chevy, his paranoia and competitiveness lead him to race the Taylor-Wilson team from New Mexico to D.C., with the winner getting the losing car. For connoisseurs of American cult cinema, this 1971 movie is a treasure trove of influence and reference. (The vintage Chevy was later driven by Harrison Ford in "American Graffiti," for one.) The director, Monte Hellman, shot it in bracing natural light in wide-open Techniscope. It's essentially a mood piece, about men in the grip of a narrow obsession that allows them to pass unscathed through a small-town, pre-mall America, which Hellman catches with an eye and ear for sloth, distrust, and parochial allegiances. Oates's performance is what lifts the film above just being a lyric ramble: his Beat and beat-up aura is perfect for the character, and no one could stumble along or pass out better than he.—*M.S.* (BAM Rose Cinemas; Aug. 31.)

THE VILLAGE

M. Night Shyamalan has made a career out of devising films that manage to frighten and excite without ever quite coming alive. Given his obsession with the deceased, this may be construed as appropriate. Even by his standards, however, this new picture is dangerously dour. The setting is a hamlet in the American countryside, ringed by crackling woods and inhabited by a community so glum that its leader is played by William Hurt. The roles of his fellow-elders are taken by, among others, Sigourney Weaver and Brendan Gleeson, while the younger generation is represented by Joaquin Phoenix and Bryce Dallas Howard—the only live wire on the scene, and hence a considerable relief. The love between these two is the spark for mysterious occurrences, notably the invasion of the closed society by a bevy of red-robed woodland beasts. As is Shyamalan's wont, there are twists, although they are so heavily signalled as to be drained of shock; what is surprising is that, even here, in the midst of a humorless conceit, the viewer can be stirred and dismayed; when a director is damned for repeating himself, it can be a sign that he has touched a nerve whose rawness refuses to fade.—*A.L.* (8/23/04) (Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 1, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Metro Twin, Sutton 1 and 2, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village East Cinemas.)

WE DON'T LIVE HERE ANYMORE

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Cinema 1, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE WOMAN IN THE WINDOW

One of the best of Fritz Lang's American movies—a thriller with the logic and plausibility of a nightmare. Lang's technique is so sure and so seductive that the viewer completely identifies with the safe, serene protagonist (Edward G. Robinson), an associate professor of psychology at a New York City college, and shares his shock and fear when he's caught in a trap. The professor is interested in the relation of motive to homicide—an interest that's purely a matter of intellectual curiosity. Then, when his wife and child are out of town, he visits a woman's apartment; her lover comes in and unexpectedly attacks him, and he kills the intruder with a pair of scissors. Joan Bennett is the woman in the case, Dan Duryea is a blackmailer, and Raymond Massey is an assistant district attorney. Nunnally Johnson produced, and adapted J. H. Wallis's novel "Once Off Guard." Originally released in 1944.—*Pauline Kael* (Walter Reade Theatre; Aug. 25-26.)

ALSO PLAYING

BENJI: OFF THE LEASH!
Empire 25

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Film Forum. Sunshine Cinema.

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Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.

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Chelsea Cinemas and Quad Cinema.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Battery Park 11, West St. at Vesey St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (212-924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (212-398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (212-757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 66th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (212-688-3800).
Pioneer Theatre, 155 E. 3rd St. (212-254-3300).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sunshine Cinema, 143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182).
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—A tribute to Jet Li. All films are in Cantonese. Aug. 25 at 7: "Twin Warriors" (1993, Yuen Woo Ping). ♦ Aug. 26 at 7:30: "The Defender" (1994, Corey Yuen). ♦ Repertory nights: films featuring Marlon Brando. Aug. 27 at 7:30 and Aug. 28-29 at 6:30: "On the Waterfront" (1954, Elia Kazan). ♦ A Mira Nair retrospective. Aug. 28 at 2: "Kama Sutra: A Tale of Love" (1996). ♦ Aug. 28 at 4:30: "Hysterical Blindness" (2002). ♦ Aug. 29 at 2: "Monsoon Wedding" (2001). ♦ Aug. 29 at 5: "Vanity Fair" (2004), followed by an interview with Nair.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5110)—Through Aug. 29: The Folk Music Film Festival.

BAM ROSE CINEMAS

30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—Aug. 25 at 6 and 9: "In a Year of 13 Moons" (1978, Rainer Werner Fassbinder; in German). ♦ Through Aug. 31: Movies with innovative soundtracks, selected by the director Olivier Assayas. Aug. 26 at 6:45 and 9: "Scorpio Rising" (1963, Kenneth Anger) and "Vinyl" (1965, Andy Warhol). ♦ Aug. 27 at 2, 4:30, 6:45, and 9: "Assault on Precinct 13" (1976, John Carpenter). ♦ Aug. 28 at 2 and 6:45: "Last House on the Left" (1972, Wes Craven). ♦ Aug. 28 at 4:30 and 9: "The Hills Have Eyes" (1977, Craven). ♦ Aug. 29 at 2, 4:30, 6:45, and 9: "Videodrome" (1982, David Cronenberg). ♦ Aug. 30 at 4:30, 6:45, and 9: "One Plus One (Sympathy for the Devil)" (1968, Jean-Luc Godard). ♦ Aug. 31 at 4:30, 6:45, and 9: "Two-Lane Blacktop" (†).

FILM FORUM

W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—Aug. 25-26 at 1, 4:30, and 8: "The Leopard" (1963, Luchino Visconti; in Italian and English). ♦ Through Sept. 9: "They Came from Toho: Godzilla and the Kaiju Eiga." Aug. 27-28 at 1, 4:40, and 8:20: "Destroy All Monsters!" (1968, Ishiro Honda). ♦ Aug. 27-28 at 2:45, 6:25, and 10:05: "Godzilla: The Uncut Original" (1954, Honda; in Japanese). ♦ Aug. 29-30 at 1, 4:35, and 8:10: "Mothra" (†). ♦ Aug. 29-30 at 2:55, 6:30, and 10:05: "Godzilla vs. the Sea Monster" (1966, Jun Fukuda; in Japanese). ♦ Aug. 31 at 1, 4:15, and 7:30: "Battle in Outer Space" (1960, Honda). ♦ Aug. 31 at 2:40, 5:55, and 9:10: "The H-Man" (1958, Honda).

SUNSHINE CINEMA

143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—Midnight movies. Aug. 27-28: "Bulworth" (1998, Warren Beatty).

THALIA THEATRE

Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—Through Aug. 28: "Five-Star Films: Fifty Years of Audience Favorites." Aug. 28 at 6: "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes" (1953, Howard Hawks). ♦ Aug. 28 at 7:45: "Gilda" (1946, Charles Vidor).

WALTER READE THEATRE

Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Aug. 25-26: "The Johnsons: Nunnally and Nora." Aug. 25 at 1 and Aug. 26 at 8:15: "The Man in the Grey Flannel Suit" (1956, Nunnally Johnson). ♦ Aug. 25 at 4 and Aug. 26 at 6:15: "Holy Matrimony" (1943, John M. Stahl). ♦ Aug. 25 at 6:15 and Aug. 26 at 1:45: "The World of Henry Orient" (1964, George Roy Hill). ♦ Aug. 25 at 9 and Aug. 26 at 4: "The Woman in the Window" (†). ♦ Through Aug. 29: "Dark Streets and Vast Horizons: The American Vision of Anthony Mann." Aug. 27 at 2 and Aug. 29 at 2 and 6: "Man of the West" (1958). ♦ Aug. 27 at 4 and 8:45: "The Heroes of Telemark" (1965). ♦ Aug. 27 at 6:30: "Men in War" (1957). ♦ Aug. 28 at 2 and 5:45: "The Tall Target" (1951). ♦ Aug. 28 at 3:45 and 7:30: "Border Incident" (1949). ♦ Aug. 29 at 4 and 8: "The Last Frontier" (1956). ♦ Special screening. Aug. 30 at 2:30, 4:15, 6, 7:45, and 9: "Bush's Brain" (2004, Joseph Mealey and Michael Paradies Shoob).

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TO > JUICE

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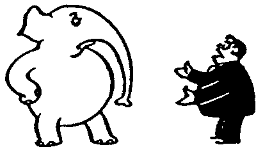
THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
G.O.P. CITY

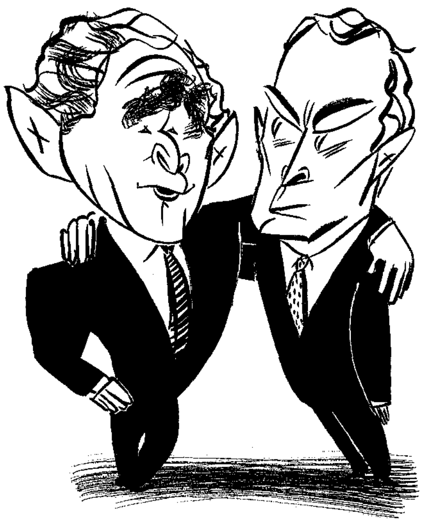


The Republicans are coming, and it isn't easy to tell who's more jittery—the visitors or the natives. On billboards and television, Ed Koch admonishes everybody to "make nice." ("ANARCHY THREAT TO CITY" was the two-inch front-page headline over a *News* story about cops and protesters.) The Republicans' decision to hold their Convention in New York, along with its late date, provoked grumbling that the anniversary of the terror attacks would be exploited for political gain, a complaint that then seemed to cause the Convention's planners to nervously distance themselves from all Ground Zero symbolism. Even so, for a campaign built on presenting George W. Bush as a "war President," New York seems a perversely logical Convention-site choice. "REPUBLICANS VENTURE BEHIND ENEMY LINES" is the way a *Financial Times* headline put it, over a story about how incorrigibly Democratic this town is.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

Not that the Republican Party and New York City are strangers. It's true that Democrats have always outnumbered Republicans here—the current ratio is five to one—and that the last G.O.P. Presidential candidate to carry the city was Calvin Coolidge. But the Party's destiny has often been shaped in New York. There was Abraham Lincoln's breakout performance at Cooper Union during the 1860 primaries. And, a hundred years later, the now obscure but then famous Compact of Fifth Avenue (known among some conservatives as the Sellout of Fifth Avenue), when Richard Nixon met with Nelson Rockefeller in the latter's palatial apartment and agreed, in exchange for Rockefeller's endorsement, to support the civil-rights movement.

Governor Rockefeller was one of the most formidable in a line of local G.O.P. establishment giants which goes back at least as far as 1862, when George Opdyke became the first Republican mayor of New York, unseating a Democrat who had proposed seceding from the Union in order to continue trading with the Confederacy. (He wanted to take Long Island with him, and to call his statelet the Free City of Tri-Insula.) The draft riots of 1863 are remembered chiefly for their massacre of black New Yorkers, but Republicans are entitled to take pride in having been secondary targets of the racist mob. The mansions and businesses of prominent Republicans were burned. The mayor's house was threatened. Brooks Brothers was sacked. The big Republican dailies, Horace Greeley's *Tribune* and Henry Raymond's *Times*, were besieged. At the *Times*, Raymond and one of his chief shareholders (Winston Churchill's grandfather, it turned out) personally manned Gatling guns in the newspaper's windows to keep the mob at bay. (Nowadays, the *Times* supports gun control and endorses mainly Democrats.)



New Yorkers still regularly elect Republican mayors—the incumbent and his predecessor, to take two examples. And many of the city's great reformers and crime-fighters have been Republicans: Teddy Roosevelt, Fiorello LaGuardia, Thomas E. Dewey, John V. Lindsay, Rudolph Giuliani. The local advocates of Good Government, tilting against Tammany Hall and other patronage machines, have tended Republican, too. In 1948, a moderate New York City Republican actually came within hailing distance of the White House, and if Governor Dewey had managed to win his eminently winnable race against President Truman perhaps the decline of the East Coast Republican establishment would have been averted, or at least delayed.

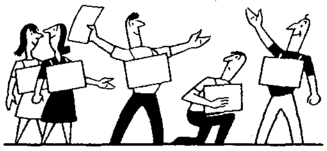
Remnants of the old patrician tradition live on, and many of New York City's Republican leaders remain markedly more liberal than their national counter-parts. Upstate, however, the Republicans, having finally escaped the dynastic grip of the Rockefellers, now resemble, ideologically, the national Party—a fitting outcome when one recalls that the Goldwater coup at the 1964 Convention, which eventually changed everything in American politics, was essentially engineered by the brilliant hard-right political operative F. Clifton White. White was from upstate New York. So was Goldwater's running mate, Congressman William E. Miller. John Lindsay, meanwhile, who refused to support Goldwater, won forty per cent of the African-American vote the following year in the New York mayor's race.

So it will be interesting to see how the Convention's hosts—local Republican leaders—get on with their thousands of red-state guests. (The true hosts, it may be argued, meaning those who will foot the serious bills, will be the same cast of corporate favor-seekers we saw buttering up the Democrats in Boston. But bracket that dispiriting thought.) Mayor Bloomberg has already been brusque, pace Koch, with certain out-of-towners who have crossed him. He ridiculed Tom DeLay, the feared House majority leader, after DeLay demanded that part of the Convention be moved offshore, onto a cruise ship; he even urged Party donors to reconsider giving money to DeLay, whose legislative leadership on issues affecting New York has been, by any standard, unhelpful. (DeLay, for example, is largely responsible for the federal government's imminent failure to renew the ban on assault weapons. If you don't count drug lords, there probably aren't ten New Yorkers who want to see assault weapons re-legalized.) Similarly, earlier this summer, the Mayor was preparing to give a lunch for wealthy Republican donors at his home when he noticed that one of the guests of honor, a congressman from Ohio, had just helped block the transfer of four hundred and fifty million dollars in federal antiterrorism funds to, among other cities, New York. The congressman found himself abruptly disinvited. No one knows better than the billionaire Mayor that, while New York may never be Republican country in voter numbers, it is a huge money pot for both major parties. Some Party leaders grumble that Bloomberg is really more New Yorker than he is Republican. They've got that right, of course. He wouldn't be in office otherwise.

They have been saying the same thing about Rudolph Giuliani for years—certainly since he supported Mario Cuomo against George Pataki in the gubernatorial race of 1994. But Giuliani has become a special case. Because his performance after the terror attacks made him a national hero, he can support gun control and abortion rights and oppose a constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage and yet remain indispensable to both the Bush campaign and the Republican Party generally. And this is where the choice of New York for the Convention, which at first seemed brilliant and later seemed boneheaded, may end up being fortunate for the Republicans after all. It gives the Party a convenient reason to do the politically intelligent thing and put on a relatively moderate, centrist face, with a lineup of prime-time speakers which includes Bloomberg, Pataki, and, especially, Giuliani—who, in addition to his crossover appeal, is uniquely positioned to reflect forcefully, and with complete authority, on the horrors of September 11, 2001, and their vast ramifications.

—*William Finnegan*

PUBLIC LIFE
TRICKY DICK



A political prank, according to a mock dictionary entry on Dick Tuck's business card, is "a political activity, characterized by humor, devised to unmask, ventilate, bring to light, debunk, hold up to view, etc., the comical, ludicrous, or ridiculous, etc., incongruities, follies, abuses, and stupidities, etc., esp. of a candidate for office." Tuck, best known for tormenting Richard Nixon, was the twentieth century's premier political prankster. He is eighty now, with ruddy skin and a full head of white hair. He lives in a studio on the top floor of a two-story concrete-block student apartment house near the University of Arizona in Tucson. On a recent afternoon, a visitor had to walk gingerly through the place to avoid stepping on all the names that Tuck dropped: "I saw Jack Kennedy two weeks before he died. . . . Cesar Chavez . . . Dick Goodwin . . . Marquis Childs . . . Bobby Kennedy and I became very good friends. . . . Justice Douglas's second wife, Mercedes . . . Frank Mankiewicz and Pierre Salinger . . . John Chancellor and I used to go up to the Rainbow Room. . . . Michael Dukakis and Jerry Brown came to my eightieth-birthday party. . . . Hunter Thompson shot a pistol at my wedding." As for personages still in the game, Tuck related that he had run into John Kerry at a campaign rally in Tucson earlier this year. "Kerry said, 'What are you doing? Come with me.' So I flew to Phoenix with him on his campaign plane."

Tuck can name the host cities of both parties' Conventions for the past half century, and is armed with an anecdote about each of them. He was underwhelmed by his experience in Boston last month, but he's still planning to come to New York. "The only thing that saved me at the Democratic Convention was staying in Cambridge. I ran into Bill Clinton and Vernon Jordan at the Charles Hotel. Clinton was eating. Hillary stuck her head in. It was one-thirty in the morning."

In New York, Tuck will be staying at a friend's Park Avenue apartment, and he'll stake out a table at O'Neal's, near Lincoln Center. "It's near ABC. It's the last of the press bars. It was *the* place in the Clinton '92 Convention. It's where all the stories were leaked."

At the Republican gathering, Tuck intends to post daily updates on his Convention Web site. (He also maintains a couple of other political Web sites, including one called Le Fouille-Merde—roughly, "The Shit-Stirrer.") "I plan to write about what Richard Nixon would think of the current crop of Republicans and their party," he said. "The Conventions have become meaningless," he went on. "They're manufactured events. You go back to '72 —George McGovern didn't make his acceptance speech until 3 A.M.! That would never happen now. For me, it's a once-every-four-year reunion, an opportunity to run into old friends. You're kind of surprised they're still alive. They're surprised I'm still alive."

Tuck walks a few miles every morning. He invariably wears baggy Bermuda shorts and bright-red socks. In his apartment, he has a photo of himself standing beside an old Wollensak reel-to-reel tape recorder—"the type they used at

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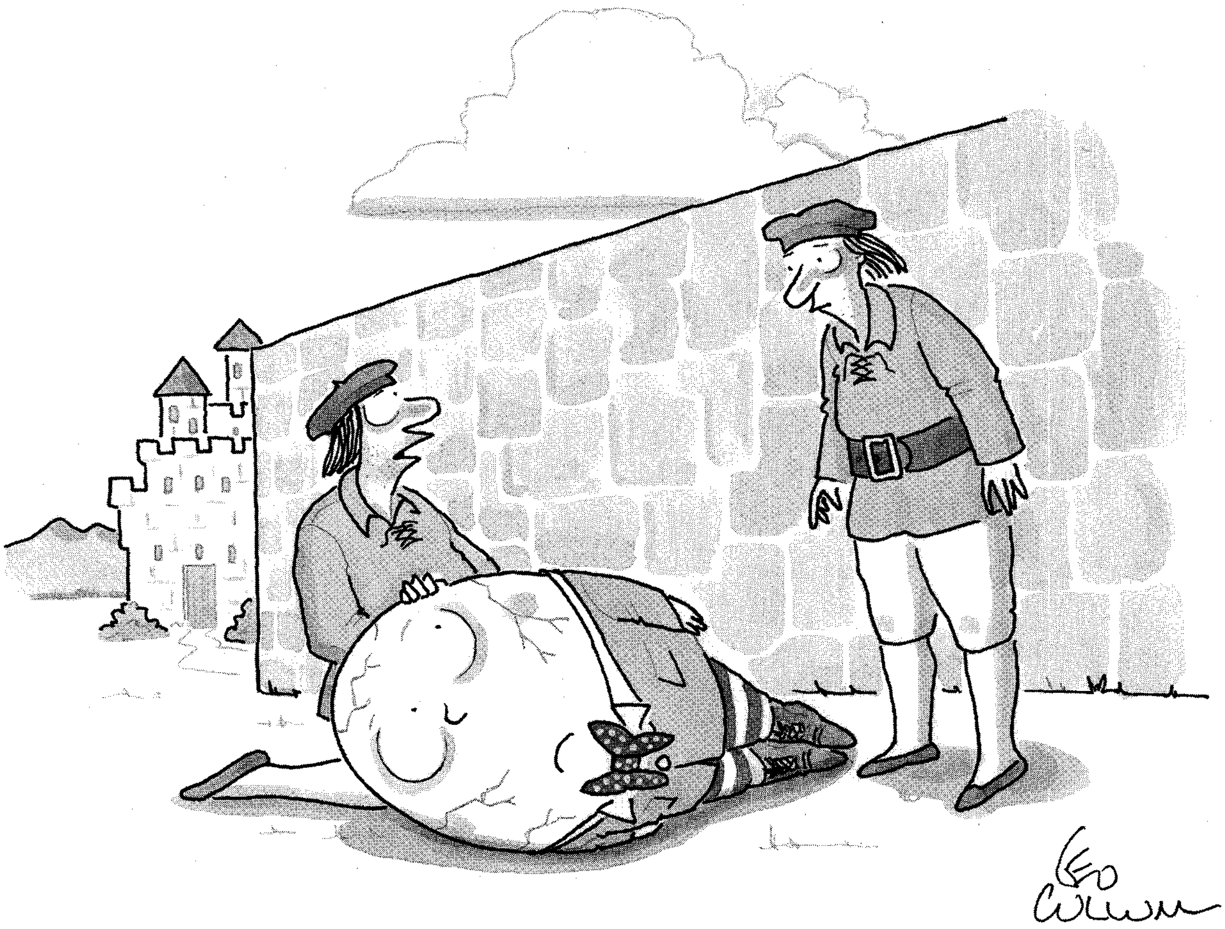

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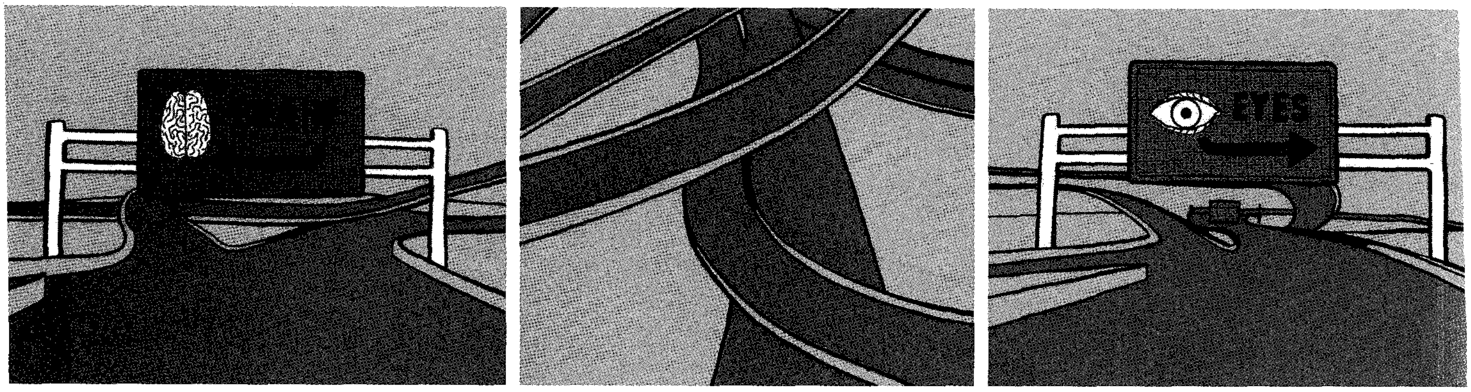

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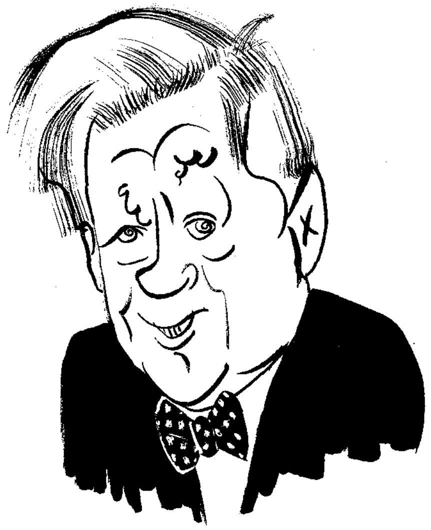
the Nixon White House." Nixon's career paralleled Tuck's, and his White House staff tried to develop "a Dick Tuck capability," an effort that spiralled wildly out of control. The morning after Nixon's first Presidential-campaign debate with John F. Kennedy, Tuck asked an elderly woman to wear a Nixon button, hug the candidate, and say loudly, "Don't worry, son. He beat you last night, but you'll win next time."

Tuck pulled off his best-known prank in Los Angeles in 1962, during Nixon's California gubernatorial campaign. The press reported that five years earlier Howard Hughes had lent the candidate's brother two hundred and five thousand dollars. The loan, which had not been repaid, was widely seen as an attempt by Hughes to curry favor with Nixon. At a rally in Chinatown, Tuck distributed signs and fortune cookies that read "Welcome Nixon!" over a row of Chinese characters. Nixon smiled broadly for the cameras, until he was informed that the Chinese script said, "How about the Hughes loan?" Nixon grabbed a sign and, on camera, ripped it up. (Later, Tuck learned, to his chagrin, that the Chinese characters actually spelled out "What about the huge loan?")



Dick Tuck

These days, Tuck lunches regularly at P. F. Chang's China Bistro, in the Tucson foothills, with his friend Sam Zelman, a retired network-news executive who is nearing ninety. Tuck starts with a Martini or two, then delves into the day's headlines. Despite his summer plans, he has concluded that his style of pranks has no place in the politics of the age. "I couldn't exist in this environment," he said. "The problem is there will be no surprises. And there aren't any independents anymore."

—*Tom Miller*

THE WAITING ROOM
AUGUST

Until a few years ago, if you wanted to locate your therapist during the month of August, your best bet was to scour the summer resorts on the New England coast, such as Truro and Ogunquit, where vacationing shrinks have traditionally gone to escape their patients. In 1996, however, Judith S. Kaye, the chief judge of the state of New York, put an end to most occupational exemptions from jury duty, and since then psychologists and psychiatrists—not to mention doctors, lawyers, orthotists, embalmers, and practitioners of Christian Science—have had to fulfill this civic obligation along with everyone else. Lately, some dutiful citizens have reported that an unusually high concentration of mental-health professionals can be found this month in the Jurors Assembly Rooms at 111 Centre Street.

One morning last week, an amateur pollster went down to the state Supreme Court, in lower Manhattan, to investigate. In a series of windowless rooms on the building's third and eleventh floors, there were, all told, about two hundred and fifty aggrieved-looking New Yorkers. "We assign courtrooms and choose potential jurors here—that's all we do," a clerk announced. "We don't handle your individual problems here."

The first step was to identify the shrinks. The decision was made to exclude from the survey those whose appearance suggested a non-therapeutic professional affiliation: slouchy kids in basketball jerseys and baggy jeans, willowy model types, middle-aged bantamweights wearing tight purple silk shirts and matching trousers. Doctors and dentists, it turns out, often look as if they could be therapists, though they are usually better dressed. Other occupations whose members might be mistaken for therapists include antique dealer, professor of textile design, and manager of classical musicians. Peter Weiss, a performance artist who bears a marked resemblance to Sigmund Freud, said, "Because of my beard, many people assume I'm a psychoanalyst."

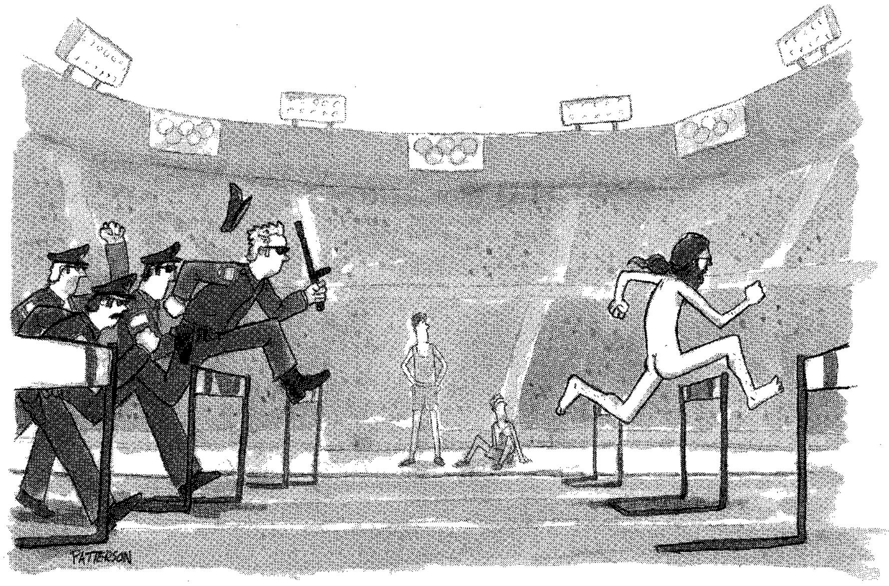
One promising candidate, a thoughtful-looking gray-haired man in a blue blazer, turned out to be an investment banker. He reported, though, that he had been questioned in a voir dire the day before along with about forty other potential jurors, among them several mental-health practitioners. After the third or fourth of these practitioners had been identified, the presiding judge said, "My God—I thought all you folks took August off to go on vacation."

Several hours of aggressive canvassing in the jurors' rooms turned up four psychologists. One of them, a shortish, balding analyst in a tweed jacket and sensible shoes, declined to answer questions about jury duty or anything else. "Try not to take it personally," he said. The other three, all middle-aged women, were more forthcoming. Among other topics, they discussed whether therapists would make good jurors (yes, but they rarely get picked, because they're too easily swayed by a defendant's unhappy childhood) and how often their patients display anxiety and irritation at having to do jury duty themselves (a lot).

None of the psychologists expressed concern that jury duty would cut into their vacations. Alessandra Sternberg, who practices in the West Village, said that she prefers to take off at other times of the year anyway; and an Upper East Side analyst, who asked not to be identified, noted that she and her husband, who is also in the profession, had already spent two weeks in Maine. Lynn Pearl (Upper West Side) said, "I don't cluster with herds of other therapists in Wellfleet or wherever—I want to get away from these people."

On the main question—Do shrinks tend to try to schedule their jury duty in August?—there was no consensus. Sternberg said that she was unaware of any trend, but added, "When I told my therapist friends that I was doing it, they said, 'Oh, that's a great idea.'"

Vincent Homenick, the chief clerk of the court's jury division, conceded the possibility that more mental-health professionals serve in August, but he had no data with which to back it up. He did, however, have a folder containing some of his favorite excuses that citizens try-



ing to get out of jury duty have sent in over the years. He pulled out a summons that someone had returned with the word "Deceased" written across it, accompanied by a Baggie that supposedly contained the dead man's ashes.

Homenick's office is at 60 Centre Street, in Room 139—informally known as the excuse room. A group of the interviewers there finally confirmed that, yes, many psychotherapists do postpone their jury-duty service until vacation time, thus causing a spike in their numbers every August.

"They tend to try to get out of jury duty, claiming that their patients are going to fall apart without them," Sandra Conti, an excuse-room veteran, said. "They don't like to take no for an answer, and sometimes they put on a big scene."

Another interviewer, Kevin Browne, added, "They always want to dominate the conversation, and that's just not going to happen. I tell them that jury duty is a privilege we all share, but they keep asking for a deeper explanation of why they have to serve."

"I've never met a group of people who need psychological help more than psychotherapists," Gregory Sullivan, one cubicle down from Browne, said. "I kind of end up helping *them.* They come in and sit on a semi-couch and tell me about their problems—which are sometimes very personal—and why they can't possibly serve." He added, "I would definitely not seek their professional services."

—*Adam Green*

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AT THE BEACH
FLIP-FLOP EMERGENCY

It's hard to imagine that there is any major American clothing brand that does not have a store in the consumer vortex that is East Hampton; and it is equally hard to imagine that the most avid of shoppers, strolling past the Ralph Lauren boutique and the Scoop franchise and the Anne Klein shop, might feel that his or her purchasing opportunities are seriously compromised by a lack of options. There is, however, no J.Crew store in East Hampton, or in any of the neighboring Hamptons; and if the necessity for yet another place at which to buy a polo shirt or a pair of flip-flops may not be apparent to the town's residents and weekend visitors, the deficiency is certainly of concern to J.Crew corporate headquarters.

Erin Bixler, who is twenty-two and recently graduated from the University of Michigan, and Katye Rhett, who is twenty-one and is entering her senior year at the University of the South, in Sewanee, Tennessee, are the form that J.Crew's response to this deficiency has taken. Bixler and Rhett, each of whom has a tidy ponytail, blue eyes, and golden skin, constitute J.Crew's "beach delivery" service team. Beach delivery is something of a misnomer, since Bixler and Rhett, who make their rounds in a 1988 Jeep Grand Wagoneer, actually deliver not to the sand itself but to beach houses. The service makes available, during limited weekend hours, a handful of the company's items—cargo shorts, tank tops, and the like—to the Hamptons house guest who discovers that he can't make it to Monday without purchasing one of those weird madras patchwork blazers.

To most New Yorkers, the idea of spending every Friday and Saturday afternoon in Hamptons traffic might sound like the makings of a term in Purgatory, but not to Bixler, who comes from Blacksburg, Virginia. "Do we have the best job ever, or what? It's so fun," she said one recent Friday, upon setting out for the day. She was wearing white shorts and a T-shirt the color of watermelon-flavored candy; Rhett wore a white miniskirt, a blue cardigan, and a new pre-distressed J.Crew cap.

Only five orders had been placed that Friday, but the pair did not appear to be concerned by the slowness of trade. Bixler, who was driving, turned onto Montauk Highway. "One of the most fun parts of the job is that you get to learn all the back roads," Rhett said. "And I like it because I never realized how farmy it is out here."

One of the first stops was at a house in Water Mill. "J.Crew delivery!" cried the recipient, a woman in a vivid green-and-blue pants ensemble, as she answered the door, a toddler and a cleaning woman looking on from inside. "It's fun that we get to drive around and see all the nice houses," Bixler said. A friend had invited her to P. Diddy's annual White Party a few weeks earlier, to which all the guests had come dressed in white. "It was fun," she said. "It's always interesting when everyone wears the same color."

After making a drop-off at Zonehampton, an exercise studio in downtown East Hampton, Bixler and Rhett each took a sheaf of handbills and fanned out on Main Street to distribute them. "We try to talk to people when they're sitting down on benches, because people don't like being approached when they're walking along," Bixler said. "But it's difficult, because usually everyone who's sitting down is talking on a cell phone."

—*Rebecca Mead*

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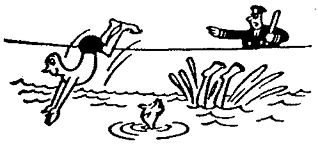
CANNONBALL!



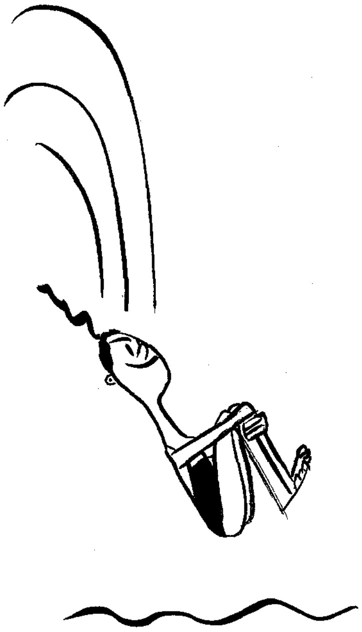
Neddy Merrill, the hero of John Cheever's story "The Swimmer," "had an inexplicable contempt for men who do not hurl themselves into pools." Neddy would have been troubled by aquatic developments over the past two decades. After a golden age in the seventies—a decadent, late-Roman last hurrah—the American pool has suffered a gradual decline: thanks, for the most part, to concerns about safety and liability, diving boards have been removed and deep ends undeepened. At municipal pools across the country, the once-ubiquitous one-metre springboard has become an endangered species; and the three-metre high dive—the T. rex of the community pool—is now virtually extinct.

Such developments have consequences. In recent years, the fortunes of the formerly dominant United States Men's and Women's Diving Teams have suffered, too. In the last two Olympics, medal counts for American divers reached their lowest levels since the 1912 Games, in Stockholm. In Athens, the Americans are underdogs to the Chinese and the Canadians (*the Canadians!*). Ron O'Brien, U.S.A. Diving's national technical director, and the former coach of Greg Louganis, said last week, "You can't put your finger on any one thing, but having so many diving boards taken out around the country has had a serious impact on our sport, no question about it."

Putting aside the matter of competitive decline, though, what does the increasing scarcity of springboards—and of opportunities for young Americans to display their talents for contortion and water displacement, as well as for freaking out their mothers and annoying lap swimmers—augur for American pool culture?

Last week, a friend with a heavily chlorinated past was asked to recall the jumps and dives of his youth. After a moment, he said, "Well, of course there's the cannonball family: The can opener." (A cannonball with one leg extended.) "And then the hammerhead, and its close cousin, the watermelon." (Cannonballs landed head first, and on your back, respectively.) "There's the jackknife." (Touch your toes in midair and then kick out into a dive.) "The sailor's dive." (Head first, arms at your sides.) "The Superman." (Body straight, one arm extended.) "The Watusi." (He was a bit foggy on this one.) "The ballbreaker." (Maintain a cross-legged, seated posture in the air.) There was a long silence—an unwelcome flashback, perhaps. Finally, he added brightly, "The flying squirrel." (Head first, arms behind your back, hands grabbing your ankles.)

At the John Jay Pool, on East Seventy-seventh Street, diving has been relegated to a small, deep-bottomed pool tucked away behind the main pool; it is open only intermittently. On a recent visit, the moment the diving pool opened, all swimmers between the ages of eleven and twenty-five cleared out of the main pool and crowded in front of the springboard. There were many cannonballs, some sprawling jumps and dives—executed with varying degrees of intentionality—and a handful of frontflips and backflips. When someone plunged in with particular élan or clumsiness, the gallery erupted.



Apart from the cannonball, though, the jumps and dives of yesteryear were nowhere in evidence. The resident flip practitioner, a twenty-year-old named Ryan, who had cornrows and wore baggy black shorts, paused before launching himself off the springboard. "The can opener? Don't know it," he said. "I don't have names for what I do."

Later that afternoon, at the Marcus Garvey Pool, on 124th Street, the last people in the water were three high-spirited teen-age girls named Domonique, Tiyanah, and Shearie. They were doing cannonballs. There was a drained diving pool nearby, behind a chain-link fence covered with black tarp. The girls had adapted to conditions at Marcus Garvey, coming up with their own interpretations of the signs that were posted everywhere. Apparently, they understood "No Running," "No Diving," and "4' 6" Deep" to mean "Racewalking," "Horizontal Jumping," and "Deep Enough." The restrictions made cannonballs ideal.

The cannonball may be having a moment. It is certainly practical, in these shallow-bottomed times: it does not require a diving board or deep water or even much skill, and it is quite forgiving when you get it wrong. Although the cannonball could be called the S.U.V. of the pool—oversized, brash, hormonally hard-wired—it can also be exceptionally versatile. During the past few years, there have been some notable show-business cannonballs: the first was Bill Murray's cannonball-as-perfect-expression-of-middle-aged-despair in "Rushmore"; then there was James Gandolfini's cannonball-as-domestic-negotiation-tool on "The Sopranos" last spring; and Will Ferrell's cannonball-as-apotheosis-of-grooviness in "Anchorman" this summer. Recently, the Macon *Telegraph* observed, "Of all the grand entrances—popping out of a cake, dropping by in a parachute, red-carpet arrival—nothing says 'Here I am!' like a cannonball." The cannonball has even entered the political arena: when John Kerry announced, in June, that John Edwards would be his running mate, he also mentioned that he was appointing Edwards's four-year-old son, Jack, as his campaign manager, because, as Kerry said, "he does a wild cannonball."

Should we be concerned about the cannonball becoming America's national dive? Coach O'Brien doesn't think so. "I would call it a water-entry stunt, not a dive," he said last week, as he prepared to watch some of the proceedings from Athens. If he had his druthers, something prettier and more challenging—the jackknife, maybe, "or, as we call it, the front-dive pike"—would come back in vogue. "I like entries with no splash," he said.

—*Field Maloney*

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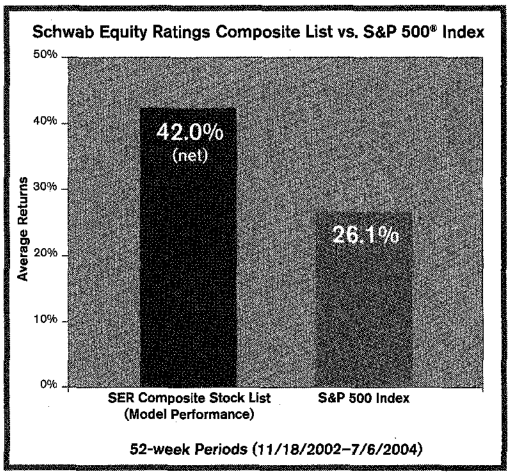

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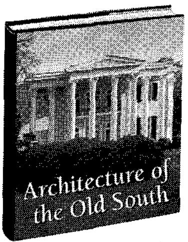

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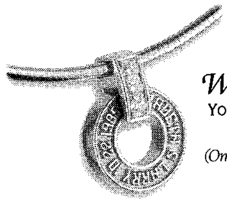

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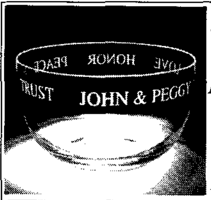

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LETTER FROM ATHENS

THE PLAYING FIELD

Iraqis and Americans find themselves in opposite positions.

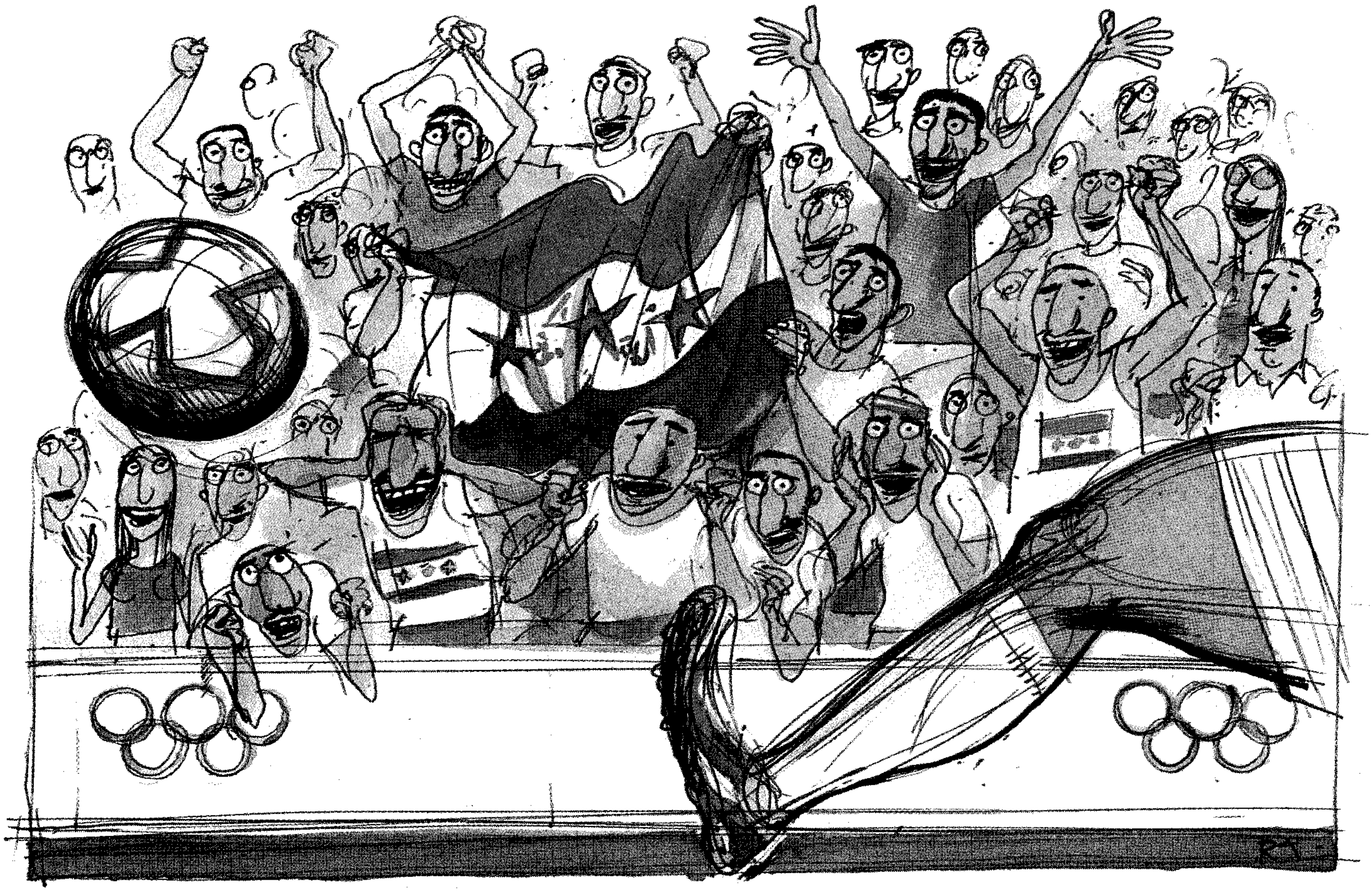
BY GEORGE PACKER

Omónia, in the heart of Athens, is a working-class district of six- and eight-story concrete high-rises built in the nineteen-sixties on the bones of old garden houses, in an enormous development scheme that Athenians now regret. Even with its streets festooned with colorful Olympic flags and its traffic thinned by newly constructed sections of the Athens metro, Omónia is dense and oppressive. This is where a good many of Greece's new immigrants live or hang out—Albanians, South Asians, and, in the back streets and cafés around the Hotel Joker, off St. Konstantin Street, Iraqis. On the first Sunday evening of the Olympic Games, those streets were teeming with raucous young men from Mosul, Baghdad, Kirkuk, and Zakhu. Though Greece's blue-and-white flag could be seen here and there, Iraq's flag, which is red, white, and black, with three green stars, seemed to be everywhere—flapping from car windows, printed on T-shirts, painted on cheeks. In a couple of hours, the Iraqi soccer team was going to play Costa Rica at Karaiskaki Stadium, near Piraeus, the port city five miles southwest of Athens.

For Iraqis, the soccer team's presence at the Games is a rare and utterly surprising bit of good news. After the American invasion of Iraq, the practice facility in Baghdad was looted. In July, the team's German coach, Bernd Stange, quit and went home, out of fear for his safety in Baghdad. The new head of the Iraq Olympic Committee, Ahmed al-Samarrai, survived an assassination attempt in July. In the past year, Iraq's soccer team had to play its "home" games in Jordan, because no team was willing to play in Baghdad. And the players' history is even sadder: until last year the president of the Iraq National Olympic Committee was Saddam Hussein's son Uday, who made it a policy to torture the athletes under his supervision when they didn't perform to his satisfaction.

In spite of these past and present challenges, the Iraqis defeated Saudi Arabia in an Asian qualifying match, 2–1, to land a spot at the Olympics. For security reasons, the twenty-two soccer players, along with seven other Iraqi Olympians, flew out of Baghdad International Airport in secret on board a Royal Australian Air Force plane. Then, in the first round of the Olympics, Iraq knocked off Portugal, one of the world's most powerful teams, by a score of 4–2. The Iraqi team's star, Younis Mahmoud, was smashed in the face by a Portuguese player, then scored a goal while wearing a bloody bandage on his forehead. Omónia's Iraqi expatriates were euphoric, and the neighborhood was approaching a state of pandemonium.

To watch the Costa Rica game, I rode the metro down to the stadium with a group of four young Iraqis. They are illegal immigrants who crossed into Greece from Turkey several years ago. Among them were Aymon, who is thirty-three and repairs satellite dishes, and Adnan, who is twenty-eight and purchases wholesale fruit for a shopkeeper in Omónia. They work twelve-hour days, send money back to their families, and avoid the Greek police. Aymon is a Chaldean Christian, Adnan a Kurd. Adnan's poor English embarrasses him, yet he struggled to explain to me the history that prevented him from becoming a doctor or an engineer. He was born in Zakhu, which is in northern Iraq, near the Turkish border. He quickly became a prize student; when he was twelve years old, he and eleven other top students in Zakhu travelled to Baghdad, where Saddam Hussein gave them each three thousand dollars in scholarship money. But war and ethnic discrimination made it impossible for him to



The chant went up: "I-raq! I-raq! I-raq!" National unity, unachievable in Baghdad, was easily forged at Karaiskaki Stadium.

RICHARD THOMPSON

go beyond high school. In 1996, fighting was taking place between Kurdish factions in Iraq, and Adnan escaped forced conscription by the local party in power and fled to Turkey, where he welded furniture in Istanbul until 1999. Then, because his parents and thirteen siblings in Zakhu were counting on him, he slipped across the border into Greece, in search of better-paying work.

Jobs aren't hard to find in Athens—in fact, many Iraqi immigrants helped build the new Olympic facilities—but working papers cost more than five thousand dollars in fees. Adnan's employer is unwilling to help, so he remains an illegal alien. He tells Greeks that he's an Arab, because Kurds have a criminal reputation. His Greek is better than his English, yet he finds that his presence is barely tolerated in Athens. He imitated the natives' attitude toward immigrants: "Come here—go—what you want here? I am Greek, you're not Greek." In the past decade, Greece has gone from an almost entirely homogeneous country to one with an immigrant population of eight per cent. So far, Greece has managed to avoid the immigrant slums that incubate social problems in Western Europe—and the neo-Fascist politics that usually accompanies them. There are an estimated ten thousand Iraqi immigrants in Greece, and every one of them seemed to be riding on the metro with Adnan and his friends to the Iraq-Costa Rica match.

Low ticket sales and no-shows, driven by fears of terrorism, have plagued almost every event of the Games. Sweaty travel agents trying to unload the tickets of their missing clients are a common sight at box offices around the city, and it was even possible to buy a scalped ticket, at face value, just minutes before swimming's race of the century: the two-hundred-metre-freestyle final, in which the Australian Ian Thorpe beat the American Michael Phelps. No surprise, then, that the bright-red plastic seats of the brand-new Karaiskaki Stadium—which is across the metro tracks from the volleyball arena, the equally state-of-the-art Peace and Friendship Stadium—were barely a third full for the first-round match between Iraq and Costa Rica. Of the announced attendance of 12,150 fans, probably seven were for Costa Rica. The remaining 12,143 fans clustered tightly in the front of the stands, along both sidelines.

Few of the Iraqi immigrants in Greece are Arab; almost the entire Iraqi Olympic soccer team is. This didn't stop the crowd from screaming for their players, or standing and passionately singing along as the national hymn—the old one, which Saddam had replaced with an anthem to the Baath Party—played over the public-address system. A strange inversion of the Iraq I've come to know in the past year was taking place. Not only were young Iraqi men with gelled fade haircuts swaying shirtless to the amplified blasting of Jimi Hendrix performing "All Along the Watchtower"; they were doing it with one hand clutching a beer and the other caressing the bare shoulder of an Iraqi girlfriend in a skin-tight top. No guns were in sight. The presence of an American elicited neither hostility nor worry but, on the contrary, drunken jubilation. Equally surprising were the two neatly dressed middle-aged evangelical Christians sitting behind me—Sari Suliman, an immigrant from Baghdad, and Daoud Riad Irsaneous, an Iraqi Christian from Cairo, who claimed to have converted hundreds of Egyptian Muslims, under the ruse of teaching theology.

A few flags of Kurdistan—a yellow sunburst on red, white, and green—were waving across the stands amid a far greater number of Iraqi flags, but the chant that went up again and again, from thousands of Kurdish, Chaldean, and Assyrian throats, was "*I-raq! I-raq! I-raq!*" National unity, unachievable in Baghdad, was easily forged at Karaiskaki Stadium. In Iraq, under the old regime, fedayeen militiamen and other fanatics used to cry, "My soul and blood I sacrifice for you, O Saddam!" The soccer fans changed only the last word: their souls and blood would be sacrificed for Iraq.

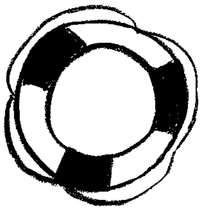
In the sixty-seventh minute, with the game still scoreless, a substitute midfielder named Salih Sadir prepared for a corner kick. The crowd had been growing drunk and anxious, and, as Salih's teammates bunched in front of the Costa Rica goal, fans across the stands began stamping their feet in a frenzy. During one fifteen-minute period, Salih and his teammates made four corner kicks; none of them led to a goal, but with each new attempt, the noise of the crowd rose higher. As Salih prepared the fourth corner kick, I glanced over at Adnan. He was squeezing his eyes shut so tight that his hands, which were pressing his shaved head, looked like a vise. A few rows down and to the left, a skinny, shirtless guy was wild-eyed and hyperventilating as he rhythmically pounded two empty seats that had long since been vacated by fans who spent most of the match on their feet. The longing for a goal seemed unendurable. "*I-raq! I-raq!*"

When Salih's fourth kick found the foot of his teammate Hawar Mulla Mohammed and then the back of the Costa Rican net, Iraqis began streaming over the low wall that separated the stands from the field. Some of them dove onto an ecstatic pile along the sideline, under which Hawar lay buried by his teammates. Bottles full of soda rained onto the grass. Adnan threw his head back and extended his open hands toward the sky, as if he were saluting a god. The stadium announcer pleaded for order in Greek, French, and English, but the hapless Olympic security officials and the unusually tolerant Athens cops were no match for the Iraqi immigrants, who, far from a home that had never treated them well, were losing control of passions that were clearly inspired by more than soccer. The evangelical Christian from Baghdad leaned toward my ear and gestured at the mayhem on the field. He was just able to make himself heard. "This is the problem in Iraq," he said.

Five minutes later, Iraq scored again, on a header. Joyous fans galloped in the ungainly manner of fanatics across the field and seized an unresisting Iraqi player, kissing him on the cheek. This time Hawar, who had made the assist, immediately turned and gestured for the fans to stay off the field. He might as well have asked them to go home. The match ended with Iraq victorious, 2–0.

Amid the exodus from the stadium—during which thirty or forty men unfurled an enormous, billowing sheet of canvas that had been painted with the Iraqi flag—Aymon, the oldest and coolest-headed of the four friends, explained why the Iraqi soccer team is doing so well. Nowadays, if Salih botches a corner kick, he no longer has to worry that, upon returning to Baghdad, he will be shut inside a spiked coffin by the late president of the Iraq National Olympic Committee. "Now," Aymon told me, "they are playing for themselves."

At the opening ceremony in the new Olympic Stadium, the Iraqi delegation received particularly loud cheers. Several Greek intellectuals told me that this greeting was a message intended for President Bush, and pointed out that the Cubans and Palestinians were also warmly welcomed. (President Bush himself has tried to lay claim to the Iraqi Olympic Team, boasting about them in a campaign commercial, which several Iraqi soccer players have asked him to take off the air.)



"Greece is the most anti-American country in Europe," Harry Papasotiriou, a Stanford-trained political scientist who teaches at Panteion University, told me. Greek leftists blame American foreign policy for the civil war of the late nineteen-forties and the military dictatorship of 1967-74. According to Papasotiriou, Greek Orthodox rightists have even longer memories, and connect President Bush to the Fourth Crusade, of 1204, when Christians from Western Europe sacked Constantinople. Athens has been the capital of a small, weak, conspiracy-minded Balkan outpost for far longer than it was the world's first democracy. Achilles Skordas, a law professor at the University of Athens, said, "The history of Greece since the early nineteenth century was in the Balkans. It was not in Paris or in London but in Sofia, in Belgrade, in Istanbul." NATO's bombing of Serbia during the Kosovo war provoked massive protests in Greece, and after September 11th a student at Skordas's law school put up a picture of the Twin Towers aflame, with a caption that drew a parallel to the devastation of Belgrade. Anti-Americanism is what's left of Greece's centuries-old ambivalence about the Western world. These latest Greek Olympic Games mark the country's effort to accept its place as a normal, modern European nation.

The Americans here are in the opposite position from that of the Iraqis: they are personally welcomed and politically resented. Yet so far there have been no political protests in Athens. "You don't invite people into your house and then show them your teeth," an Athenian named Katerina told me. Perhaps fearing the worst, just before the first Summer Games since September 11th the U.S. Olympic Committee warned the American athletes to shun the strutting, flexing, whining, and showboating that have not endeared them to the world at previous Olympic Games. The Americans paraded decorously through the opening ceremony, and they were cheered in the most anti-American country in Europe, at the most anti-American moment in history.

The limits of good will on both sides

were tested the night the United States basketball team played Greece at Helliniko Indoor Arena, in Athens. (The Greeks have spent more than eight billion dollars on these Games. What will they do with their fifty-two-hundred-seat synchronized-swimming natatorium after the world goes home?) At this contest, there were very few empty seats; the flags were overwhelmingly Greek, and, instead of promising to sacrifice soul and blood, the home crowd sang "O Greece, I always think of you!" when they weren't taunting the Americans with the chant "Puerto Rico! Puerto Rico!" (Two nights before, the U.S. basketball team had suffered a humiliating loss to Puerto Rico.) Facing a deafening Greek crowd and a submediocre Greek team—which made the Olympics only out of courtesy to the home team—the Americans played with the panicky, mistake-prone intensity of a team in an elimination game. Rather than fight for the inside shot, they went for three-pointers—and missed. They overpassed. And every time an American—especially Allen Iverson, who embodies the flamboyant style of the N.B.A.—touched the ball, the arena exploded in whistles and jeers. "*Ellás! Ellás!*" the crowd chanted as a Greek player lined up for a free throw. "Choke! Choke!" muttered the man from Phoenix in the straw fedora seated to my left; he kept up a lonely running patter of his own. The Greek clanked both free throws. "Nice shot, buddy!" the man from Phoenix said mockingly. "But we don't boo. Don't get me started! We don't boo."

It was true: the Americans scattered around the arena were as docile as the Iraqi soccer fans had been riotous. Perhaps it was because the Greeks trailed by just six points at halftime, and Iverson was the only American scoring in double figures. Perhaps it was because they didn't want an argument. An American to my right, an assistant high-school principal named John Finn, from California, said that on the way in from the airport his cabdriver quickly ascertained that he was an American and said, "You shouldn't be in Iraq." In the stadium, Finn said, it actually felt good to be outnumbered and outshouted.

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At a tennis match between the American Mardy Fish and the Spaniard Juan Carlos Ferrero the previous day, Kevin and Jen Kloehn, a young couple from Milwaukee, repeated the refrain they kept hearing from Greeks and everyone else: " 'We love Americans. We hate your President.' " They added, "Even a Swiss woman said this." The Swiss, who had been neutral about Hitler! The Kloehns had gone to the Sydney Olympics, in 2000, and made sure to wear garish red-white-and-blue clothing. This time, they left the patriotic outfits at home. Indeed, the Americans in Athens are so subdued that, for once, they blend in.

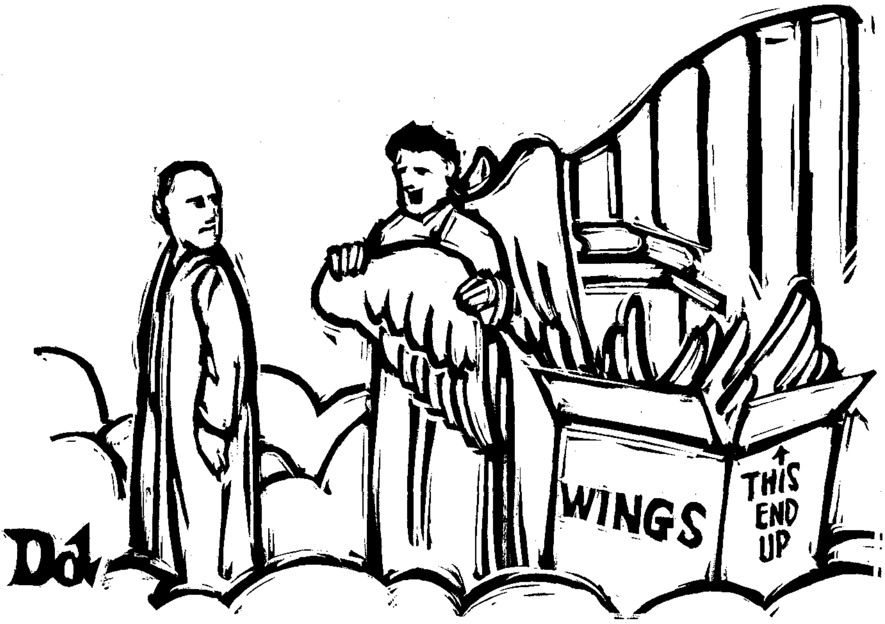
Maybe all of this self-restraint has taken the fight out of Stephon Marbury, LeBron James, and Allen Iverson. During the Cold War, the Olympics were an excuse to play out all the tensions that were too dangerous to be turned to actual warfare between two nuclear-armed powers. And so there were outsized emotions over a blown call at the end of the 1972 basketball final between the United States and the Soviet Union; over the "miracle on ice" at Lake Placid; over naked displays of American prowess at Los Angeles; and, always, over the quadrennial battle cry of "U.S.A.! U.S.A.!" It's not a chant one hears much in Athens. The sole superpower's unilateral actions have its military tied down in Iraq, American fans wearing khakis in Athens, and its Olympic basketball team shooting four for twenty-one from beyond the three-point line. As for the Greeks—otherwise the most gracious of hosts—they are booing the latest edition of the Dream Team, a young civil engineer named Dartzonis Vasilis told me, not only because Bush and Blair and the Anglo-Saxon bloc are trying to rule the world but because the team just isn't very good.

With six minutes left in the fourth quarter, Greece pulled to within one point. At the next time-out, the arena succumbed to an orgy of full-throated, flag-waving nationalism of the kind that only countries with long histories of foreign domination are permitted. The man from Phoenix had barely spoken since halftime. Somewhere, a few Americans tried to work up the old chant of "U.S.A.! U.S.A.!" But this is no longer the Reagan era. The home crowd snuffed it out in a barrage of furious boos. At the end, it hardly mattered that the Americans hung on to win, 77–71; it was a Pyrrhic victory, and the Greeks taking the metro home well past midnight had the air of having righted some deep historical wrong. Afterward, the American player Carmelo Anthony said, "It was like the whole world was against us."

A few miles west of downtown Athens, Adnan shares a spare two-room apartment—he even has to share his bed—with his friend Abdullah, from Zakhu. On a wall hangs a wedding picture of one of Adnan's brothers, standing next to his bride, who is also Kurdish. Among the apartment's few amenities is a digital satellite television. Three nights after the victory over Costa Rica, I joined Adnan and Abdullah to watch Al Jazeera's broadcast of the Iraq-Morocco soccer game. This match was being played in Patras, several hours west of Athens, and Adnan's boss at the grocery store, a Greek, wasn't about to give him the afternoon off so he could make the trip. Aymon's boss, a Syrian, made him work that evening, so he missed the whole match. Attendance in the apartment was three people, with no painted faces or Iraqi flags, no Hendrix soundtrack, and long silences in the stretches between action around the nets.

Iraq, which had already clinched a spot in its group to advance to the quarter-finals, was resting its top players, but Adnan still lived and died with every shot on goal. At halftime, with the score 0–0, the Al Jazeera sports analyst kept replaying Morocco's best attempts, until Adnan was driven to ask in exasperation why the man had nothing good to say about Iraq. I suggested that the antipathy might have something to do with the presence of a hundred and thirty thousand American troops there. Adnan looked at me with a kind of startled hurt, then he nodded, tight-lipped. American forces have long been stationed in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, he pointed out. So why is Al Jazeera against Iraqi soccer? It wasn't pan-Arab political bias against the new Iraq that bothered Adnan. It was the slight of Iraq's miraculous team.

The game seemed headed for a gentlemen's tie of 1–1, when a Moroccan sub tapped in a pass in the closing minutes. The 2–1 loss the Iraqi team suffered that night was meaningless, given that it had already secured a quarter-final spot. All the same, the room was uncomfortably quiet after Adnan turned off the TV. Abdullah sat still, with his hands folded over his stomach. Though there was hardly any food in the apartment, Adnan offered to cook me some chicken for dinner. I declined: it was late and he was tired, and more than a little depressed. On the way back to Omónia, I remembered the wedding picture on Adnan's wall and regretted saying no. The offer was Adnan's attempt to re-create Iraqi hospitality at his immigrant apartment in Athens, without the proper food or kitchen, without a wife or sisters. At that moment, I wanted the Iraqi Olympic soccer team to win more than anything in the world. ♦



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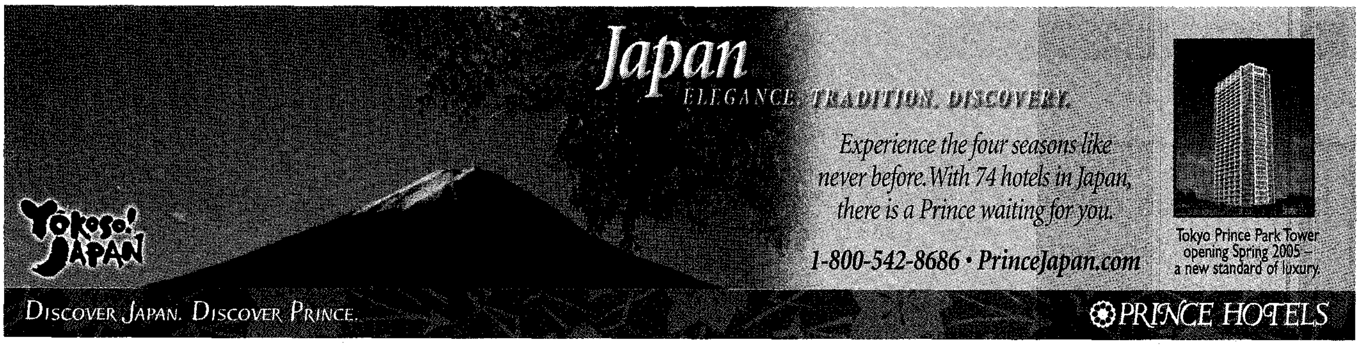
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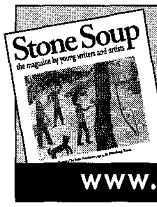

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ANNALS OF AMUSEMENT

HOW HIGH CAN YOU GO?

The roller coaster's new golden age.

BY KEVIN CONLEY

The Midwest is often spoken of as if everybody there were sane, but the weather makes up for it. The weather often changes its mind, drastically, within minutes. On the road through Ohio, you pass towns like Berlin and Milan, that really should be somewhere else, take the exit for Edison's birthplace, and head north to a sign that says "Sandusky Welcomes You: America's Roller Coast." Then, as you head toward Cedar Point amusement park, on Lake Erie, crossing the slim causeway over Sandusky Bay, you can see bright blue sky, huge lake-country thunderheads, the cars ahead of you hydroplaning on the blacktop, and the pleasure craft on either side already taking advantage of the latest break in the storm.

When the causeway doglegs and all of a sudden you spot sixteen roller coasters in the same place, it can take your breath away. Manhattan has a great skyline, but when you see it for the first time, you can't say, "Everything out there I'm going to the top of—today." At Cedar Point you can, and you can do it in your bathing suit, screaming, with a gang of friends. There's one rule, though: no spike jewelry.

The main reason for the rule is Top Thrill Dragster, which is four hundred and twenty feet tall and reaches its maximum speed of a hundred and twenty m.p.h. in less than four seconds. At that rate of acceleration, the flesh on your face begins to flatten and spread back toward your ears, tears stream out of your eyes, and your average ten-pound head feels like it weighs forty-five pounds, making it difficult to dodge any spike earrings or septum spikes or spiked tribal chokers that might fly loose.

Top Thrill Dragster is one of a new generation of roller coasters that generate their own publicity by setting world records—the tallest, the fastest, the longest, the loopiest, the highest g-force, the most time upside down. Chains like Six Flags, the country's largest, with twenty-nine parks, and Cedar Fair, which owns Cedar Point and eleven other parks, have been engaged in their own version of the arms race, putting up one big-ticket coaster after another in the hope of luring in riders. Cedar Point, which holds several records, has become the most famous front in that war. But by some measures Six Flags is ahead: eight of the twenty fastest coasters in the country are at one or another of its parks, and all of them have opened in the past five years.

Coaster enthusiasts are calling it a new golden age, but today's high-speed steel coasters don't have a lot in common with the old wooden twisters of the first building boom, back in the nineteen-twenties. Top Thrill Dragster is typical of the extreme nature of the latest rides. Once you're locked into your seat—with a simple one-person lap bar in cheerful yellow—the car moves slowly along the track and parks there, leaving you to look out and up for much too long, maybe fifteen seconds, feeling the high-decibel rumble of a revving dragster engine. Yellow, red, and green lights flash in sequence down the tower—they call it the Christmas tree—and you're off. Under normal operating conditions, one trainload of eighteen passengers goes every ninety seconds, straight up, with a pause at the top—a brief, lovely view of the bay and the park, far below—followed by a dive straight down, a two-hundred-and-seventy-degree barrel roll at seventy miles an hour. The whole thing's over in twenty-five seconds of almost pure g-force.

When it opened last year, Top Thrill Dragster replaced the three-year-old Millennium Force, some three hundred yards to its west, as the country's tallest and fastest. The difference between the two is a fair measure of the direction of the coaster wars. Millennium Force has its terrifying touches—before launch, a cable block that pulls the train up the

Top Thrill Dragster at Cedar Point park. Photograph by Robert Polidori.

three-hundred-and-ten-foot lift hill slides down the track toward you, frictionless as a guillotine—but after the first huge eighty-degree drop the train glides and swoops through a succession of steep hills and smooth, sharply banked curves. On Millennium Force you feel like a bird. On Top Thrill Dragster you feel like a veal chop.

Nobody at the Walt Disney compound in Glendale, California, the headquarters of the company's theme-park "Imagineers," takes advantage of the division's relaxed dress code more than Joe Rohde. On a typical day in June, he wore sandals, amulets from Kathmandu, and a light cotton shirt with yeti footprints which he bought in Bali. His beard was trimmed in a style just shy of topiary, and his left ear was decorated with a collection of sculpted earrings so heavy as to turn his earlobe into a low-hanging pendulum. It registered his excitement as he talked about Expedition Everest, the new roller coaster being built in Walt Disney World's Animal Kingdom, in Florida. The two-hundred-foot-tall coaster, expected to open in 2006, will reportedly cost Disney a hundred million dollars.

"Expedition Everest is about the sanctity of nature and the limits of human encroachment," Rohde said. On a shelf behind him he kept a test patch of matted white fur and the skull of a gigantopithecus, a ten-foot primate, the largest on the geological record, that became extinct around five hundred thousand years ago, because the ride is also about a face-to-face encounter with an angry yeti. "The premise is that we are mountaineers and trekkers—*we* are Expedition Everest—and we are showing up on this day, in this little Tibetan village on the outskirts of the imaginary kingdom of Anandapur, where entrepreneurs have taken an old train that used to work the tea plantations in the foothills and rerouted it to run through the mountains to the Everest region, which we can see peeking through the path, in the distance."

On a typical Disney coaster, storytelling takes precedence over brute g-forces. The big technological innovation in Expedition Everest—a high-speed track switch that allows the coaster to come to a quick stop at the top and then careen backward on a different path—owes its creation to the ride's first plot twist. The yeti, who, according to Rohde, is serious about the sanctity of the mountains, tears up the tracks: the ride dead-ends on a scene of twisted metal at the edge of a cliff. As the riders hear thunder mixing with the yeti's roar, the train, as though possessed by fear, begins a terrified retreat, although, thanks to another track switch, it soon returns to face the terror—and finally the yeti himself—head on.

Rohde, who has directed the design and theme schemes for Animal Kingdom since it was first conceived, in 1990 (before that, he taught art history and theatrical set design at a California prep school), admits that all this could be taken as a flanking maneuver in the roller-coaster wars. The type of rides he calls "ball-busting hell coasters," like Cedar Point's Top Thrill Dragster, are meant to appeal to the twelve-to-twenty-four-year-old market, a particularly thrill-seeking demographic that Disney largely concedes to its competitors. Rohde and his team design with children, parents, and grandparents in mind.

"So, in the context of Animal Kingdom, which is this big narrative park with big ideas about nature and humanity and animals and blah blah blah blah blah, this becomes a very deliberate effort to introduce kinetics, to introduce motion and noise and a prominent landmark and all that that signifies into this park." He interrupted himself with a smile. "I'm sorry. I always end up sounding like a semiotics professor. Might as well. No one else is going to take our work seriously."

Expedition Everest is a mammoth

undertaking, on the scale of a blockbuster movie. Last year, Disney's theme-park division invested more than half a billion dollars in capital improvements, with the help of $1.8 billion in admissions. (Amusement parks in general brought in three hundred and twenty million visitors and more than ten billion dollars.) The ride can, and in all likelihood will, handle more than twenty thousand riders a day. This is the big-ticket coaster's drawback, apart from the approximately one-in-three-hundred-and-fifty-million chance of spectacular death: the lines, which can make death seem like the better alternative.

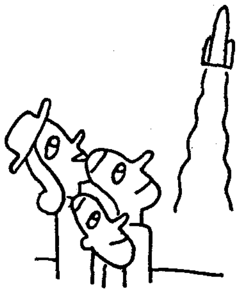
Disney has developed a "Fast-Pass" system so that riders can opt for a ticket that tells them when to return, based on a complicated calculation of number of riders, time of day, weather, schedule of competing attractions, etc. Many people prefer to wait in line. Some do so, presumably, because it provides a lull in the day when children are not asking for an Eeyore plushie or a Princess Fantasy Teapot Castle. (Disney shops are near exits, perhaps to capitalize on the rider's lightheadedness.) But Rohde's team has taken elaborate measures to make the wait part of the experience, moving the line the length of a city block past ersatz Nepalese buildings, a tea plantation, and a semi-crackpot yeti museum. "It's as much about the setup as it is about the ride," Rohde said.

Rohde showed me a sculpted foam maquette of the ride, with the recognizable profile of Everest lurking behind a mountainous foreground, coursing with rivers (which will involve actual water) and glacial ice (painted concrete). His colleague Mark Mesko, the chief coaster engineer, told me that he took great pleasure in the invisibility of his hundred-thousand-pound track switches. "This had to be done quietly, behind the guests," he said. "It was something we had to invent that we didn't even want them to know existed." For a similar reason—so that riders won't see where the Himalayan mountain range hits the ground—a landscape director has planted a wall of swaying bamboo along the edge of the ride.

Later, I was shown a 4-D construction-simulation program, which followed the coaster track as the structural-steel grid, coded in distractingly fanciful Hi-Liter colors, flicked rapidly by. The program, which, with all of its data, took about twenty minutes to load, was developed by Disney at great expense as a way of heading off costly construction delays. Expedition Everest will be the first new attraction to rely on the technology.

The project manager for Expedition Everest on site in Florida is David Wilson. Before coming to Disney, Wilson helped run the nuclear reactors on Navy submarines. On a visit to the construction site, as we stood on the concrete foundation looking up at the ride's skeleton, he told me that learning to trust the program required a certain leap of faith. There were spots, he said, sixty feet up in the air, where the track ran disconcertingly near to the steel and concrete of the mountain. "The first time I came out here myself and saw how close it was going to hit, I called my design manager and said, 'Are you *sure* this is going to work?' And he looked at that particular area on our model and he said, 'No, no, that will pass by four inches.' " Wilson laughed. "Ever since then, I don't expect there to be any issues. And there haven't been any."

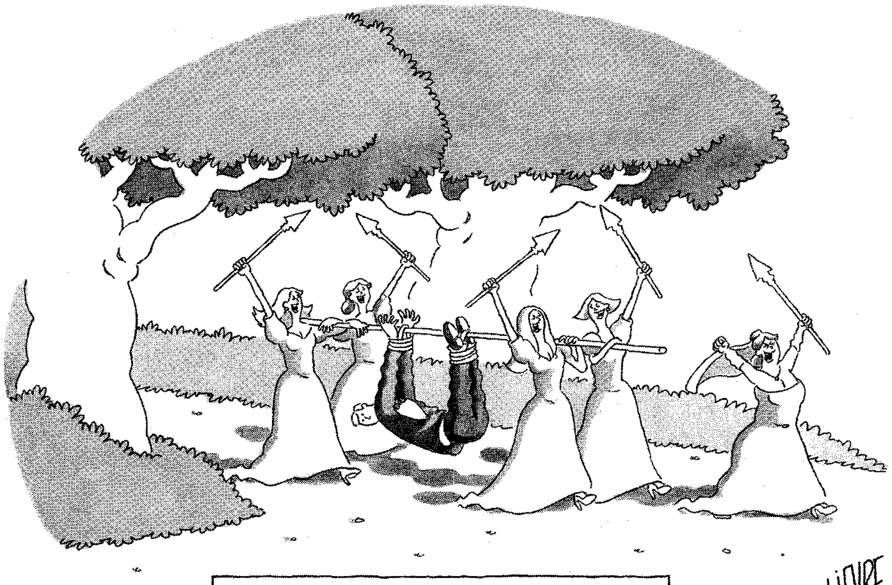
There is general agreement that the country's first roller coaster was the Switch Back Railway; the debate concerns which one. The Mauch Chunk–Summit Hill and Switch Back Railway, an eighteen-mile gravity railroad, was built in 1827 to carry coal in Pennsylvania's Lehigh Valley. Forty-five years later, when the big rail carriers rendered it obsolete, Josiah White turned the Switch Back into a thrill ride suitable for the Victorian era: you could bring a picnic. The other Switch Back Railway, which covered a gentle six-hundred-foot circuit of bunny hills at a speed of six m.p.h., was built at Coney Island in 1884, and was a tourist attraction from the start. At a nickel a ride, it earned back its fifteen-hundred-dollar construction costs in three days. Its inventor, La Marcus Thompson, became the first coaster entrepreneur, building fifty variations on his creation in the next four years.



Eleven years later and a few blocks away, Paul Boynton opened Sea Lion Park, the first enclosed amusement park, which was quickly followed by Steeplechase Park, Luna Park, and Dreamland, whose profligate use of incandescent lights made Coney Island visible from thirty miles out to sea. Thompson's competition soon offered better and more extreme versions of the gravity-driven ride, including one called Flip Flap, the country's first looping coaster, which débuted at Sea Lion Park in 1895. Its successor, Loop the Loop, proved so dangerous that eventually people rode for free; what you paid for was a seat in the grandstand, where you had a chance to see the riders' necks snapping.

Technical improvements, especially the addition of a safety bar that kept the cars from leaping off the tracks, allowed for greater speed and sharper turns, and roller-coaster construction exploded. By the late nineteen-twenties, there were more than fifteen hundred wooden coasters (but very few loops) at piers and pleasure gardens and trolley parks. Many had to fit into small and oddly shaped beachfront plots, so the designers came up with a whole list of "stunts"—side shakers, shimmies, camelbacks, kangaroo hops, fan curves, swoop curves, jump tracks, figure-eights, and spiral dips. Often the rides made use of advances in other areas of mechanics: then as now, a roller coaster was an engineer's way of telling jokes.

The jokes could have a cruel streak. Harry G. Traver, who built many of the landmark coasters of the day, made this brand of humor his specialty. The crowds lined up for it. Every morning, maintenance workers at the Bobs, the Traver Engineering Company coaster at Chicago's Riverview Park, searched beneath the ride for the wigs, eyeglasses, earrings, wallets, and false teeth that had fallen out the night before. One drunken sailor, thrown off the oceanside curve on the Cyclone Racer, a ride that Traver built on a pier in Long Beach, California, simply swam back to shore and demanded a full ride. Another Traver attraction, the Lightning, at Revere Beach, Massachusetts, killed a rider on the second day of operation and inspired a local folk remedy for unwanted preg-



A SUCCESSFUL WEDDING PARTY RETURNS FROM THE HUNT

nancy: "Take her on the Lightning."

A big breakthrough in coaster design came in 1959, when Disney introduced the first steel-track coaster, the Matterhorn Bobsleds, at Disneyland. In 1975, the Corkscrew at Knott's Berry Farm, with its spiral loops, and the vertical-looping Revolution, at Six Flags Magic Mountain, pioneered steel-loop technology, boosting park attendance. But, despite this, the model of innovation has been one of steady evolution rather than punctuated equilibrium—a little faster, a little higher, a little steeper. One effect of the incremental nature of these changes is that there hasn't been a major rethinking of the roller coaster.

The great old woodies fell into disrepair after the war. There were plenty of reasons for the neglect: television, hooligans, Disneyland, white flight, urban development. A preservationist movement began in the late seventies, spearheaded by the American Coaster Enthusiasts (ACE). In 1986, ACE helped relocate Wild One, an abandoned 1917 wooden classic from Paragon Park, in Hull, Massachusetts, to Six Flags America in Largo, Maryland, but they were too late to save any of the old Traver terror machines. Still, the organization has grown from its original group—three guys who met at a coaster marathon on the Rebel Yell, at King's Dominion, in Virginia—into a nationwide nonprofit with a membership of more than eight thousand.

Lisa Scheinin, a deputy medical examiner with the Los Angeles County coroner's office and an ACE member, has ridden, according to her calculations, nine hundred and eight coasters in twenty-three countries, on six continents. Her current favorite is a year-old wooden coaster in Göteborg, Sweden. That one she likes for its "re-ridability" and "air time"—brief moments of negative g-force at the top of a hill when a rider is thrown into the air. She renewed her wedding vows on the loading platform of a coaster (subject of the sermon: marriage is like a roller coaster). "People think because I'm a doctor I should like something more intellectual," she says. "But what I like is a really nice coaster."

Probably nobody has logged more coaster time than Richard Rodriguez, who set so many world records for the longest coaster ride that the "Guinness Book of World Records" finally changed its rules. In 2000, he did two thousand straight hours, or more than eighty-three days, round the clock. To prepare for his marathons, Rodriguez pads out the car he'll ride in. He sets up a curtain so that he can answer the calls of nature. He brings creams to avoid windburn, because at this point his marathons are "the equivalent of driving from Key West to northern Washington on a highway with your head sticking out the window," he said. "But one of the most difficult physical things is when you get five young girls riding in front of you and in back of you," he told me. "And what do they do when they go downhill? They scream. Have you ever heard a young girl or boy, ten or eleven or twelve? They have enormous lung power, and when they scream in unison as they're going down the hill, it's nasty. But screaming is a life passage. They've got to do it."

How safe are roller coasters? Statistically, the news isn't especially alarming. From 1987 to 2000, an average of 4.5 riders died on amusement-park rides every year, according to the Consumer Protection Safety Commission. Under the standard deaths-per-rider-miles formula, amusement-park rides appear to be slightly safer than cars but more than ten times as dangerous as trains, planes, or buses.

But the picture is murkier for nonfatal injuries. In 1981, in a one-sentence amendment to the federal budget, President Ronald Reagan awarded "fixed-site" amusement parks (but not lower-budget travelling ones) freedom from federal oversight. The federal "roller-coaster loophole" remained largely unchallenged until a string of four fatal accidents in one week in August, 1999, prompted Representative Ed Markey, of Massachusetts, to introduce a bill to return regulatory powers to the C.P.S.C. Markey's efforts face a Catch-22: he needs reliable injury reports to show that the agency needs the power to gather reliable injury reports. At this point, he says, he gains supporters one at a time, every time a congressman has a constituent die at an amusement park. "The passage of my bill is inevitable," Markey told me. "The only question is: How many deaths will it take before we reach a majority of Congress?"

Meanwhile, the C.P.S.C. has no power to compel parks to file accident information. The agency only estimates injury rates using emergency-room reports submitted by a sample of a hundred hospitals across the country. In 2000, according to Markey's office, lobbyists for the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions successfully maneuvered to get a hospital that was near Six Flags Great Adventure, in New Jersey, removed from this pool, on the ground that it skewed the sample. (I.A.A.P.A. denies pressuring the agency.) The result was that the number of injuries for 2001 appeared to be twenty-one per cent lower than that for 2000—a drop that the lobby then heralded on its Web site. Reports issued by the National Safety Council are no clearer: its "Injury Insights" is a sunny document, assembled by I.A.A.P.A. from figures submitted anonymously by its members, without independent review by the N.S.C. It includes a list of activities whose g-forces equal or exceed those experienced on coasters, such as bouncing on a pogo stick (4.5 g's), sneezing (3.9 g's), or getting hit by a pillow (28.1 g's).

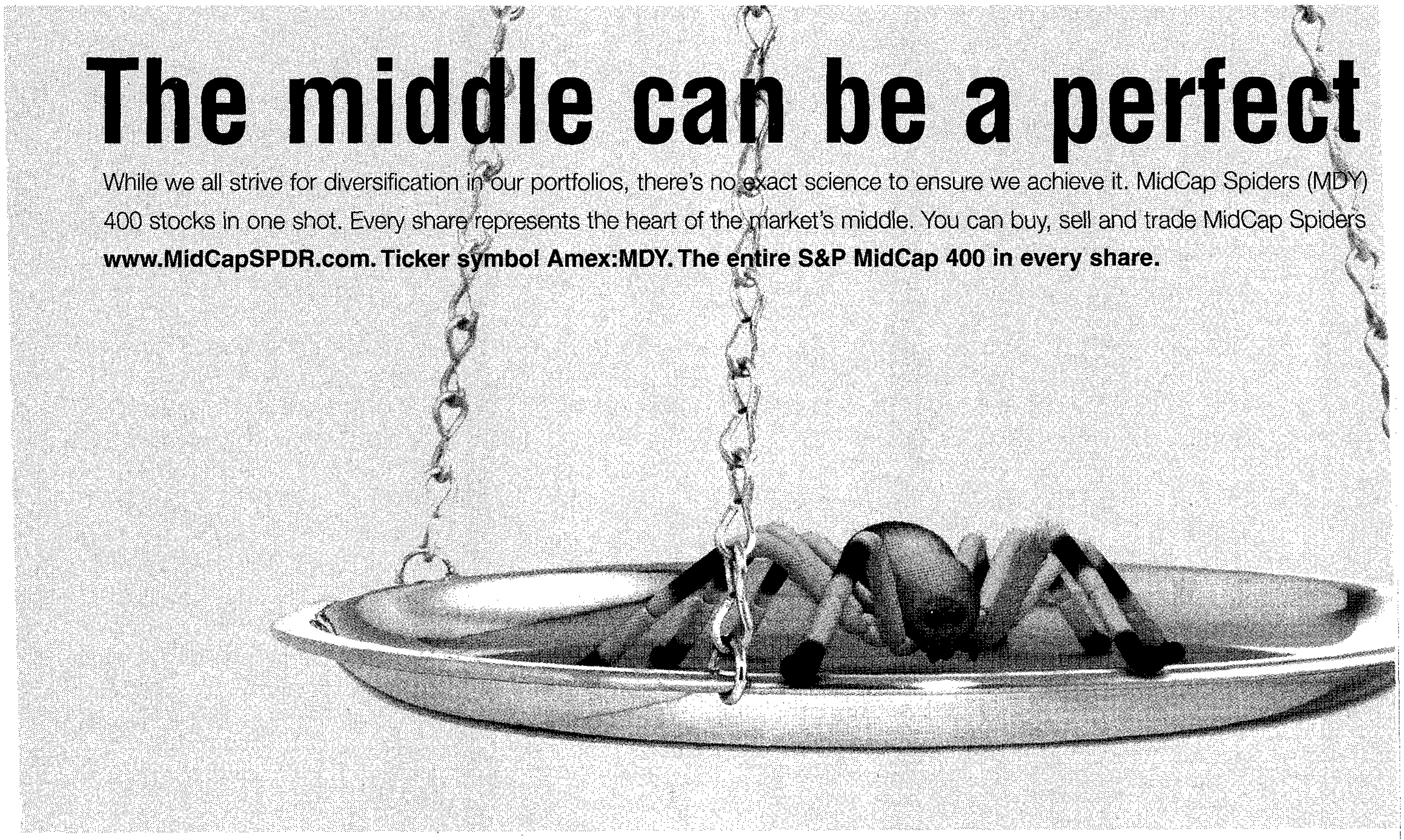
The industry argues that federal regulation would be a waste of taxpayer dollars: the government has neither the resources nor the expertise to police the rides. They say that the rides are already governed by stringent standards set by the American Society for Testing and Materials, standards that set the pattern for state and local legislation; this is how building codes work. But the standards are voluntary and eight states have no such laws in place. Texas relies on the honor system. Florida grants special exemptions to parks with more than a thousand employees—in other words, to Disney, Universal, and Anheuser-Busch, which together operate seven of the country's ten biggest parks, all in Florida.

There are also unsettling events that don't make it into the safety statistics. Last week, at Six Flags Great Adventure, twenty riders were trapped—eight upside down, twelve sideways—when electrical problems stopped cars on Batman and Robin: The Chiller. It took forty minutes to get them down.

Kathy Fackler, whose five-year-old son, David, lost the toes on his left foot when he climbed out of a car that hadn't fully stopped on Big Thunder Mountain at Disneyland, has made compulsory accident reporting her mission; her Web site, saferparks.org, is the leading advocate for federal regulation and child-safe ride design. At the time of her son's accident, Disneyland enjoyed an autonomy comparable to Disney World's in Florida. "What really bothered me was that no one had to know about the accident," Fackler said. "The park was totally in control. It's almost like you don't live in America. It was that creepy."

Thanks in large part to her testimony five years ago, California enacted model legislation requiring such reports. The first ride closed by the California law was the Roger Rabbit Car Toon Spin, at Disneyland, after a four-year-old boy, Brandon Zucker, suffered permanent brain damage when he fell from his car and was crushed and dragged by the car behind in 2000. (The Zuckers have settled with Disney.) But Fackler believes that the industry has long known about a variety of other child-safety hazards.

Peter Speth, another critic of the industry, is a serial whistleblower—just the contentious type to relish a battle against a ten-billion-dollar industry. Unfortunately, he has a felony conviction for witness tampering and has surrendered his medical license for the duration of the appeals process. Depending on which



The middle can be a perfect

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side of the story you believe, the conviction arose out of his attempts to prove his innocence in a dispute about an autopsy, or to stop the investigation into the autopsy. Despite the drawbacks he would be up against as an expert witness in court, he still supports himself by writing what he calls "work products," which have led to settlements in several cases involving various injuries sustained on rides at Disney, Cedar Fair, and Six Flags parks.

Speth told me that coasters with multiple loops and inversions subject the head to unprecedented sequences of "whipping and buffeting"—angular acceleration followed by a decelerative bounce, often against a soft collar or head restraint. (Many of the newest rides feature a sort of personal roll bar to keep the head from whipping around too much.) Speth likens these actions to absorbing a series of hockey style cross checks, or, if you will, a hop on a pogo stick followed by a whomp with a pillow. After the decelerative rebound stops the skull from rotating, the brain, surrounded by fluid, continues to travel, potentially causing shear and tearing in the network of fine veins that connect the brain to the dura, resulting, in rare cases, in a subdural hematoma—a kind of intracranial hemorrhage.

One problem for roller-coaster fans, Speth argues, is that there is a broad anatomical variation in the fineness and strength of these veins and their susceptibility to hematomas, and you may not know your place on this spectrum until it's too late. And it doesn't help if the veins are made vulnerable by dehydration after a long wait in line on a sunny day. The signs of a subdural hematoma are headache, nausea, wooziness, imbalance, numbness. Most resolve quickly, in hours or days. But some don't. If the symptoms get worse or come and go for days, Speth says, the doctor and patient may not connect the problem to the cause.

It is hard to tell whether Speth is a straight-talking Cassandra or a conspiracy theorist with a lucrative sideline in litigation: he has made careful study of existing case reports and unearthed quite a few that were not considered in earlier published studies, but the available data, for good or for ill, are very scarce. A group of neurologists and other doctors assembled from M.I.T. and top medical schools for a study into neurological injuries—paid for by Six Flags—found no case-controlled epidemiological studies and almost nothing published in scientific journals, just public-interest case reports and acceleration and g-force data submitted by the amusement parks. Their conclusions, as written up by an industry moderator, were ambivalent at best, and their ability to comment afterward limited by confidentiality agreements. Still, those I spoke with believed that it was more of a medical-legal issue (someone like Speth could convince a jury of the danger) than an actual public-health threat. Dr. Pierre Borczuk, an attending physician at Massachusetts General Hospital and an instructor at Harvard Medical School, said, "If patients truly were getting trauma from

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these roller coasters, if it were a high-risk thing like tobacco and lung cancer, there would be real associations in the medical literature. But what you find in the literature are these spotty case reports. And despite there being so many riders, nobody's saying, 'Gee, look at this, a new roller coaster and four subdurals this week!' Or, 'You know, I saw three vertebral-artery dissections on this Six Flags site near my emergency room!' That data is not happening."

GUARDIAN ANGEL

In my dreams my guardian angel takes the form of a woman,
Not always the same. He knows that I, a fleshly creature,
Need a lover's touch. We don't make love,
But there is closeness between us, and understanding.

I never believed in the presence of angels, but my dreams have changed,
And when, recently, I found an underground grotto filled with treasure,
And we were moving the sacks together, I asked him
For one more moment of the dream, which gave me peace.

—*Czeslaw Milosz*
(*1911-2004*)

(*Translated, from the Polish, by the author and Robert Hass.*)

One of the suggestions in the Six Flags study was that the researchers should put a "dummy instrumented with a six degrees of freedom accelerometer" (i.e., a crash-test dummy) on the rides to determine the range of rider head movements. Greg Hale, the chief safety officer for Walt Disney parks and resorts, confirmed the implicit revelation behind the recommendation: rides often début with few or no trials using modern crash-test dummies. "When you start putting the accelerometers into an object that can move around, it's very hard to get repeatable results," he said. "You don't always need to go that far unless you're getting into a new area of forces that you can't mathematically model."

Since even in this latest generation, extreme roller coasters seldom make much more than a marginal increase in speed, height, or g-force, it's largely left to live riders to demonstrate what happens to real heads on a roller coaster. In the coaster boom of the twenties, engineers relied on the crudest form of trial and error: if somebody died, they tried to fix the problem. Nearly a century later, trial and error is still a necessary part of the engineering process. "It's not like nobody in California was aware that something had happened in Massachusetts," Hale said, referring to the death of a fifty-five-year-old man with cerebral palsy who was thrown out of the Superman Ride of Steel at Six Flags New England, in May. "If there's a design change necessary, there's a requirement that the manufacturer send a bulletin to every owner of that ride, whether they're in Europe or Asia or any state in the U.S."

So far, ride designers have avoided confronting the actual limits of coaster engineering, or of human endurance. But, according to Daniel Keller, the general manager of Cedar Point, the coaster wars may soon be coming to an end. "We may be getting to a crossroads," he said. "Because how high *can* you go? I'm not saying somebody won't go up higher and faster, but in terms of height and speed and angle of approach, how do you top Top Thrill Dragster?" Keller, the sartorial opposite of Joe Rohde—in a stiff white shirt, gold tie, and braided-leather suspenders—is an amusement-park lifer. He met his wife when he was working at a Cedar Point cotton-candy stand in 1971, and he still likes to take a roller-coaster ride in the morning in place of a cup of coffee. Sure, he said, as he looked out of his office window at Kiddy Kingdom and the Wicked Twister beyond, "there may be a manufacturer that will come up tomorrow and say, 'We got a great concept on an eight-hundred-foot roller coaster.' We'd certainly want to take a look at it." But he seemed to view it as unlikely. "I think the next ride we do could be a new, very different sort of ride. It's a challenge for our industry."

The Coney Island Cyclone sits on the same seaside plot as the old Switch Back Railway once did, at the corner of Surf Avenue and West Tenth Street, in Brooklyn. Ever since the Albert family, who own Astroland amusement park, next door, took over the lease thirty years ago, Gerry Menditto has kept it running. "He can tell if something's wrong from the sounds of the roller coaster, the rhythm of the wheels on the track," Carol Hill Albert says. "He's like a doctor with a stethoscope." Menditto's knowledge is more hands-on than seat-of-the-pants: he has never ridden the Cyclone, because of the first drop. "To myself, I say, 'Better you than me,' " he told me as we stood looking up from the bottom of the eighty-five-foot drop. "I don't even like elevators that go too fast."

Menditto grew up a few blocks away on Neptune Avenue, and any tour of the Cyclone's machinery—the ten-foot bull wheel that drives the chain lift, the 1927 hand-brake system underneath the loading station—inevitably includes introductions to his crew. "Here's another guy grew up with us," Menditto says, pointing to Danny Mezzo, a slim sixty-two-year-old in well-pressed shorts. "He owned the best pastry shop in Brooklyn."

"The guy ruined my life!" Fat Anthony Marinaccio, a front brakeman on the Cyclone, says.

Marinaccio, who blames his hearing problems on all the screaming he's endured since 1975, doesn't ride the Cyclone either. "I can't fit into it anymore," he says. "I won't lie to you."

The Cyclone wasn't the most terrifying roller coaster of its era. It wasn't even the most terrifying one named the Cyclone—that title would probably go to the Cyclone at Palisades Amusement Park, in New Jersey, or the Revere Beach Cyclone. But with its steep first drop and sharp crash landings, its tight fifty-m.p.h. turns, its baffling crossovers under the steel-and-wood trestlework, it wasn't far off, and while its namesakes fell—in 1972 and 1974, respectively—the Coney Island Cyclone survived, just barely. In 1975, William Conway, the director of the New York Zoological Society, which ran the Aquarium next door, campaigned for its demolition, calling it a "clear choice between honky-tonk and culture." The Alberts saved the ride, but the job of running it hasn't always been a pleasure, especially on hot, crowded summer nights back in the seventies. According to Charles Denson, a historian of Coney Island, the Homicides, a street gang whose members wore crushed black hats stolen from Hasidic Jews, set up their headquarters a few blocks west, and they often held an open-air disco, known as the Zoo, on the nearby streets. "To be in the amusement business on July 4th and pray for rain?" Menditto says, shaking his head. "Now there's no more problems where you got to call in police."

But, as increasingly elaborate steel coasters come to market, the Cyclone holds its own as one of the last monuments of what recklessness used to feel like. I watched a few loads of riders angling for their favorite spot: front seat gets the clearest view and greatest psychological terror; last seat gets the biggest whiplash and hardest, fastest ride. One father, sitting with his son in the front car for the boy's first ride, pointed at a guy on Menditto's crew who was holding a hand-operated lever to stop the cars as they came into the station. "See that?" the father said. "No computer, no nothing. Just pull the big-ass arm."

Danny Mezzo took my glasses when I went on the Cyclone. The ride can be fast in the morning, from the diesel fuel they use to rinse the sea salt off the tracks, but not as fast as it gets at the end of a hot day, when the mist first starts to settle and the trains skim wildly around the tracks. But it was fast enough. The signature of an old wooden coaster is not raw miles per hour but rough speed in the curves. If you're riding alone, you slide across the seat and slam into the wooden sides (or you stop yourself halfway and later wonder why your shoulder hurts). If you're riding with someone, you crush up against each other in a most companionable way. And with twenty-six hundred feet of track jammed into that tight five-hundred-by-seventy-five-foot lot, the tricks came so fast that I never finished screaming, or laughing. It was one long scream, or laugh, or both, the whole way. It was the first roller coaster I'd been on that was anything like an emotional roller coaster. ♦

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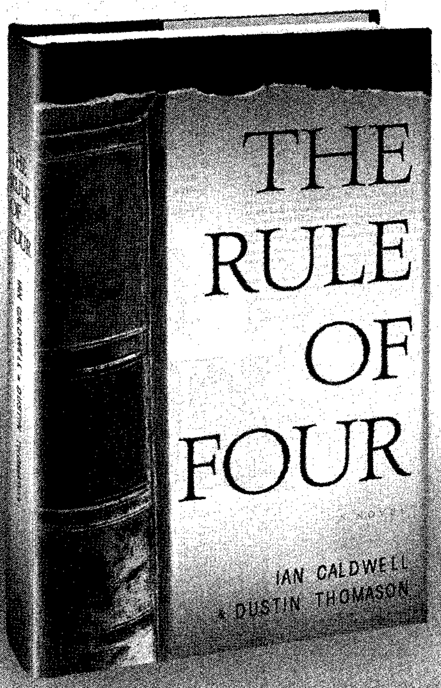

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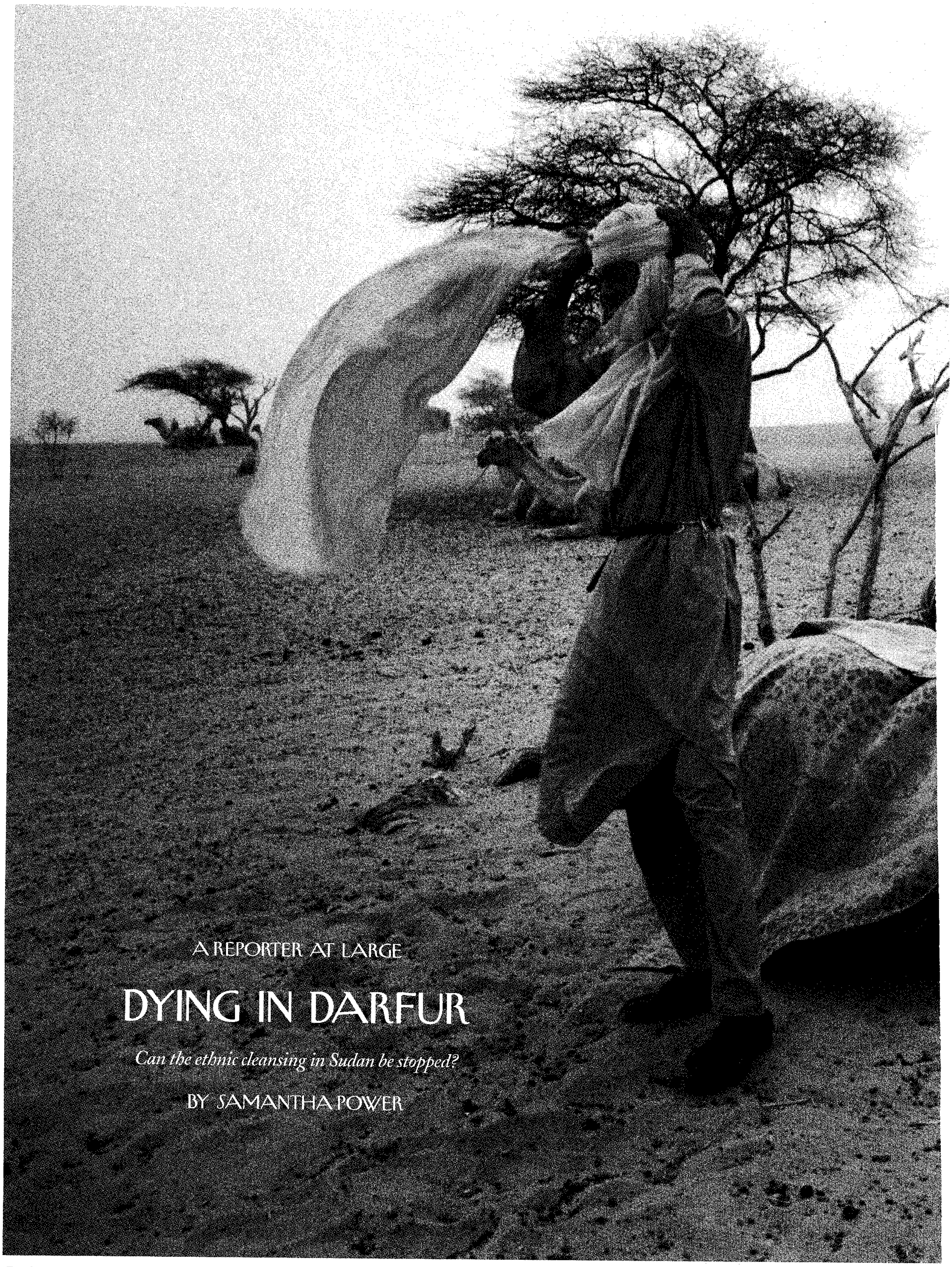


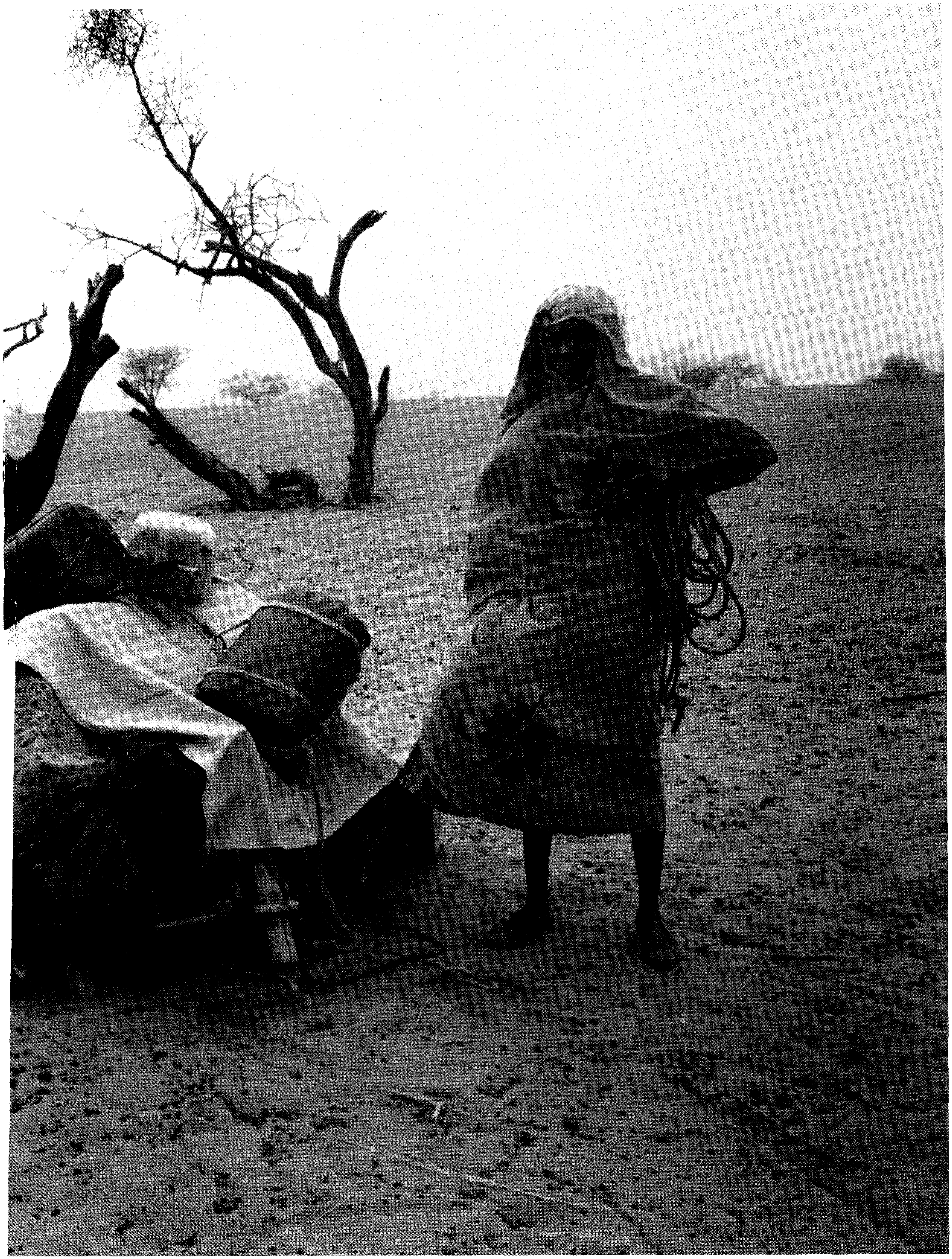
A REPORTER AT LARGE

DYING IN DARFUR

Can the ethnic cleansing in Sudan be stopped?

BY SAMANTHA POWER

Refugees in North Darfur. As many as fifty thousand Darfurians have been killed, and a million and a half displaced, by the



IPG/KATZ

advances of local Arab militiamen, who are armed by the Sudanese military. Photograph by Marcus Bleasdale.

Amina Abaker Mohammed occupies a simple mud hut with a thatched roof outside a refugee camp in northern Chad. Until earlier this year, she lived in Darfur, the western region of Sudan, where the Sudanese government is pursuing a campaign of ethnic cleansing against non-Arabs. Amina is a member of the Zaghawa tribe, one of the largest non-Arab ethnic groups in Darfur. Her village, which was burned to the ground by Sudanese soldiers and Arab militiamen, is only fifty miles from the camp, but by donkey the trip requires a weeklong journey across the Sahara, through mounds of powdery sand, up and down steep seasonal riverbeds, over gravel slopes, and around towering red-rock mountains.

Amina, who is twenty-six and Muslim, grew up in the town of El Fasher, in North Darfur. Twelve years ago, she married Haroun Adam Haggar, and moved a hundred and sixty miles north, to a farming village near the town of Furawiyah. They had six children, and made a good living growing sorghum and herding ten cows and some five hundred sheep. During my visit to northern Chad, in July, Amina told me that Arab nomads used to pass through Furawiyah with their animals, but they stopped doing so eight years ago. That was around the time that she first heard frightening stories about the *janjaweed*, nomadic Arab bandits who rode on horses and camels, and enriched themselves by stealing livestock and attacking Africans. ("*Jaan*" means "evil" in Arabic, and "*jawad*" means "horse"; "*janjaweed*" means, roughly, "evil horseman.") The *janjaweed* included local camel herders, and also nomads who migrated to Darfur from Chad and West Africa in the nineteen-seventies and eighties.

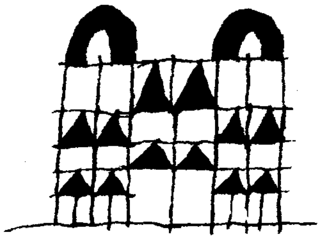
During the planting-and-harvest season, from August to November, Amina's oldest child, a ten-year-old named Mohammed Haroun, moved south with the livestock in search of grass and water. When the animals were brought back, four months later, they were ready to be sold, or used for leather, food, and milk.

In the months when Mohammed was at home, Amina recalled, she would accompany him and their animals to one of Furawiyah's two dozen wells. Amina would straddle the well, drop the bucket to the bottom, thirty feet down, and haul up the cool water; then she would empty the bucket into a trough for the animals, or into bags made of donkey hides, for storage. Mohammed would immediately follow her, sending the bucket tumbling into the darkness and using all his strength to mimic his mother's maneuvers.

By January this year, Amina told me, the townspeople of Furawiyah were on alert. The government was trying to crush a resistance movement that had emerged in Darfur, and it had enlisted the *janjaweed* as its foot soldiers. Amina's neighborhood had been inundated with family members, tribal kin, and displaced strangers, who had been driven from their homes by a combination of *janjaweed* raids and government air assaults. Many of these visitors had not stayed long. They had stopped in Furawiyah for water and quickly resumed their journey to Chad. They urged Amina to do the same. "The *janjaweed* are nearby," they said. "Leave while you still can."

Amina was no stranger to tribal killings. Five years earlier, the *janjaweed* had attacked a village outside El Fasher and murdered Africans, including two of her uncles and four of her cousins. But Amina told herself that her town would escape the violence spreading through Darfur. Unlike many towns in the region, it was guarded by policemen, who had helped fend off cattle rustlers in the past. Other villagers were less sanguine. Government helicopters had been flying overhead for three months, and some tribal leaders insisted that the Air Force was surveying the town for bombardment. They were right: soon, a military aircraft fired four rockets, two from each wing, on Furawiyah. The attack terrified Amina; although one rocket failed to explode, the others left large craters in the ground. She and her husband refused to abandon their land, but they sent all their children, except Mohammed, to hide in the mountains.

On January 31st, Amina's husband was away visiting his family. Not long after dawn, when Amina and Mohammed arrived at the wells, they heard the sound of approaching planes. Fifteen minutes later, Amina recalled, the aircraft began bombing the area around the wells, where a group of her neighbors had also gathered. She and Mohammed were separated, as she fled with a few of the family's donkeys, and he tried to assemble their panicked sheep. According to Amina, dozens of people and hundreds of animals were killed in the onslaught.



In the wake of the planes came Sudanese soldiers, packed into trucks and Land Cruisers; they were followed by hundreds of menacing *janjaweed* on camelback and horseback. Most of the *janjaweed* wore turbans around their heads and mouths, so that only their eyes were visible. They carried *hijaab*, tiny leather boxes containing Koranic verses, which were meant to keep them safe from bullets.

When Amina saw the *janjaweed* approaching, she hurried the donkeys to a red-rock hillock three hundred yards away. She assumed that Mohammed had fled in another direction, but she turned and saw that he had remained at the wells, with the older boys and the men, in an effort to protect the animals. He and the others were surrounded by several hundred *janjaweed*. As the circle closed around her son, she ducked behind the hillock and prayed.

By nightfall, the sounds of gunfire and screaming had faded, and Amina furtively returned to the wells. She discovered that they were stuffed with corpses, many of which had been dismembered. She was determined to find her son, but also hoped that she wouldn't. Rummaging frantically around the wells by moonlight, she saw the bodies of dozens of people she knew, but for a long time she was unable to find her firstborn.

Suddenly, she spotted his face—but only his face. Mohammed had been beheaded. "I wanted to find the rest of his body," she told me. But she was afraid of the *janjaweed*, who had remained nearby to celebrate their conquest with a roast of stolen livestock. She gave up and carried her son's remains to the mountain where her other children were hiding. "I took my child's head, and I buried him," she told me, dabbing her tears with the tail of her head scarf. A week later, Amina took her five remaining children on the seven-day trek to Chad. The family's last surviving animal—a donkey—died upon their arrival.

E.R., ACME ACCOUNTING: 11:57 P.M., APRIL 14th
I just realized I forgot to pay taxes in '98, '99, '02, and '03!
I have only THREE RECEIPTS!
I was playing Tetris and my computer crashed and now I don't have any records of ANYTHING!

Two days before the 2000 Presidential election, George W. Bush met the Reverend Billy Graham for breakfast in Jacksonville, Florida. They were joined by Graham's son Franklin, the president of Samaritan's Purse, a Christian relief-and-development organization that has worked in Sudan since 1993.

Sudan, the largest nation in Africa, had been mostly mired in civil war since it won independence from Britain, in 1956. The central conflict, between Muslim government forces in the North and rebels in the South, began in 1955, abated in 1972, and resumed in 1983. Some two million people died because of the war, and many of them were Christians. The situation was deeply troubling to American evangelicals, and Franklin Graham had led an effort to raise money for victims. During the breakfast meeting, Graham told me, he urged Bush to turn his sights to the suffering of Christians in Africa. "We have a crisis in the Sudan," Graham said. "I have a hospital that's been bombed. I hope that if you become President you'll do something about it." Bush promised Graham that he would.

Sudan had already attracted an unusually formidable constituency in Washington. In the nineties, the Clinton White House imposed successive sanctions against the Sudanese government. Sudan had become a haven for terrorists—including Osama bin Laden, who had settled there in 1991—and had repressed religious minorities in the South; in addition, it had failed to crack down on a slave trade that had emerged there. Backed by Christian and African-American constituencies, many U.S. lawmakers had travelled to Sudan. Senator Bill Frist, a surgeon, made several short trips there, serving as a volunteer doctor at the hospital in southern Sudan that had been bombed shortly before Graham's meeting with Bush.

President Clinton's approach was largely confrontational. In 1996, he withdrew the U.S. Ambassador, citing terrorist threats against American officials. (There is still no U.S. Ambassador in Khartoum.) The same year, the United States and Saudi Arabia pressured Sudan to expel bin Laden, who subsequently left for Afghanistan. In 1998, after Al Qaeda's attacks on the American Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, Clinton ordered a Tomahawk-missile strike on the Al Shifa pharmaceutical factory, which was suspected of producing chemical weapons. (This suspicion remains unproved.) Meanwhile, the Administration made little progress in curtailing Sudan's civil war. In 1999, Clinton announced the appointment of a special envoy to Sudan, but then never met with the person who filled the post.

President Bush was more attentive. He rejuvenated a multilateral peace process that had been hosted by Kenya since 1993. On September 6, 2001, he appointed John Danforth, an ordained Episcopal minister and a three-term senator from Missouri, his special envoy for peace in Sudan.

During the 2000 campaign, Bush frequently invoked the values of Midland, the Texas town where he and his wife, Laura, grew up, telling the New York *Times,* "People—if they want to understand me—need to understand Midland." Midland is home to several churches with sister congregations in southern Sudan. In November, 2001, Midland hosted the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church, an annual evangelical event. Some forty Midland churches participated, and many of them passed out leaflets on Sudan and devoted part of their Sunday services to the civil war and the slave trade there. A half-dozen Sudanese refugees spent the weekend in Midland and shared their stories. "They took us out of our comfort zones," Deborah Fikes, one of the event's organizers, said. "We Christians in the U.S. have to use our resources not to build bigger churches, and not to be even more concerned with being pro-life, but to show how we value life by protecting the lives that are being lost every day because of war, disease, and starvation." Midland's churches raised money for Sudanese schools, and local religious and civic leaders petitioned the White House and wrote letters to the government in Khartoum. The Chief of Mission at the Sudanese Embassy in Washington deemed "the town of George Bush" important enough to respond personally to these letters.

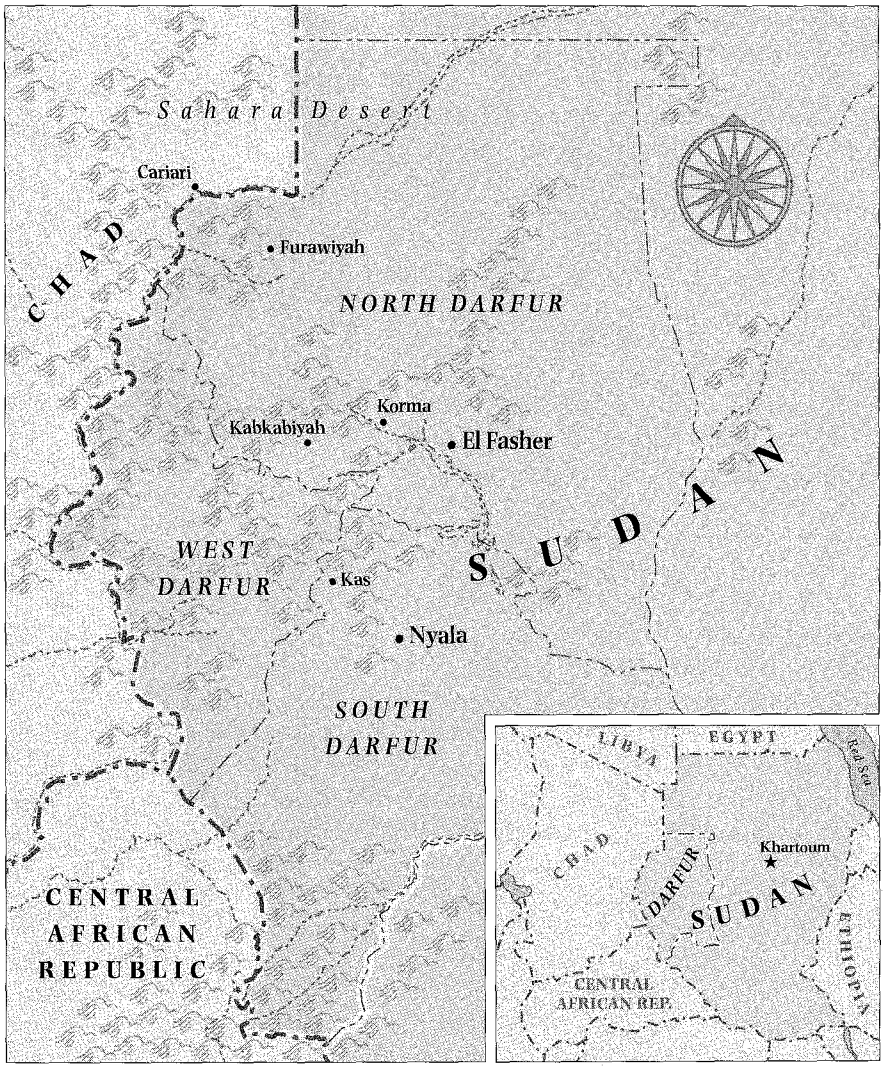
In 2002, Fikes and other activists invited thirteen Sudanese exiles to visit Midland during its annual Christian-music festival, and paired them with local youths to construct two portable "Sudanese villages." The first had seven wooden huts with grass roofs, a large thatch-roofed church, and a market, modelled on that of a typical southern Sudanese town. The second consisted of six huts that had been burned or partly demolished. Fikes had ordered some plastic skeletons from a Halloween Web site and set them aflame ("with the town fire marshal on hand!"), so that they could be displayed as charred corpses. The American evangelical community's intense interest in Sudan put Danforth and the rest of the U.S. government team under considerable pressure.

The Bush Administration was also aware that Sudan's oil reserves yield two billion dollars in annual revenue, although just a fraction of the oil has been tapped. (Oil was discovered in Sudan, by Chevron, in the nineteen-seventies, but it has been exported only since 1999.) These reserves, which were being exploited by China, Canada, and Sweden, were off limits to American companies, because of a 1997 executive order barring U.S. oil companies from operating in Sudan. Before U.S. companies could legally begin prospecting Sudan would have to end its civil war.

Danforth's overtures were surprisingly well received. The Sudanese government, a U.S. diplomat told me, was desperate to end U.S. sanctions and to court American oil investors, and in the wake of September 11th and the war in Afghanistan it wished to avoid being added to the Administration's target list. The southern rebels, who saw that they stood little chance of dislodging the government, were also ready to negotiate.

Thanks largely to the sudden surge in U.S. involvement, the peace talks moved forward. Both sides agreed to allow the posting of a small team of civilian protection monitors. Fighting in the South abated, and Sudan's rival parties inched closer to a long-term political agreement that they hoped would end the civil war. The President, Omar al-Bashir, provisionally agreed to share about half the oil revenues with the South, and to permit Christians in the North to escape punishments dictated by Sharia—traditional Islamic law. Bashir even offered to give the South the right to secede from Sudan six years from the signing date, if irreconcilable divisions remained. In return, the rebel leader, John Garang, said he would be willing to serve as Vice-President in a postwar government. By December, 2003, negotiators were so certain that a deal was imminent that two seats were reserved for Bashir and Garang at Bush's 2004 State of the Union address. The stage was set: Bush would delight his Christian constituency; U.S. businesses would gain access to Sudan's oil; and Sudanese civilians would stop dying. Moreover, at a time when the U.S. was isolated and mistrusted abroad, Bush would prove that he was capable of making peace as well as war—and in the process be seen as uniting Arabs and Americans, Christians and Muslims.

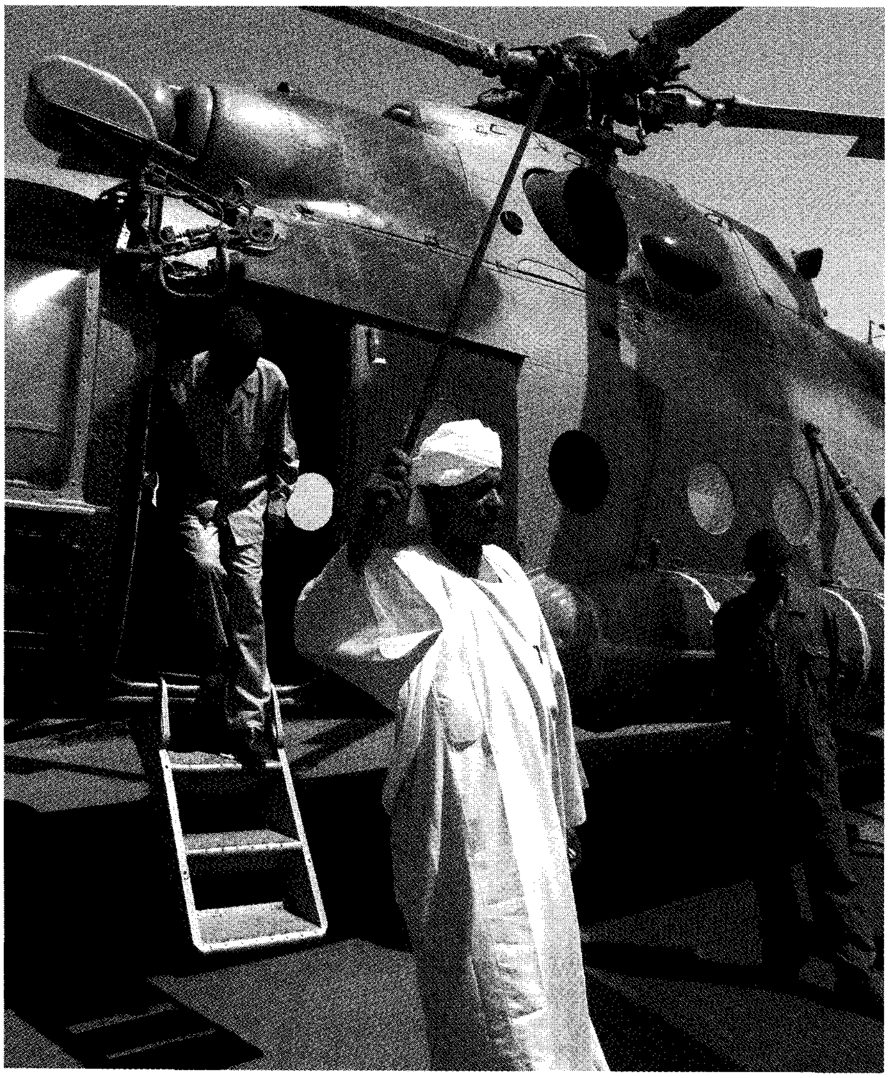
There was a difficulty with this scenario, however: Amina Abaker Mohammed's home region of Darfur had caught fire. At the same time that the Sudanese government was offering autonomy and oil profits to southern Sudanese, people in another neglected region, whose leaders had been excluded from the U.S.-backed peace talks, had risen up and demanded political reform and economic assistance. Just when Bashir's regime seemed poised to stop its raids in southern Sudan, it had launched a bombing campaign in western Sudan. Washington had a problem—and the people of Darfur had a far greater one.



Darfur, which is roughly the size of Texas, was an autonomous sultanate until 1916, when it was conquered by Britain and incorporated into Sudan. The area is topographically diverse—

JEFFREY WARD; OPPOSITE: POLARIS

high desert in the north flows into lush grasslands in the south—and ethnically kaleidoscopic. It is populated by some ninety tribes and countless sub-clans. Virtually all of Darfur's six million residents are Muslim, and, because of decades of intermarriage, almost everyone has dark skin and African features. To a visitor, Darfurians appear indistinguishable.



Despite the tradition of ethnic mixing, the population has recently begun subdividing between "Arabs" and "Africans," who are known, derogatorily, as *zurga,* or "blacks." People of Arab descent tend to be nomadic, herding camels in North Darfur and cattle in the south. The three largest African tribes are the Fur—Darfur means "land of the Fur"—the Zaghawa, and the Masaaleit. The Africans generally farm, though certain groups, like the Zaghawa, sometimes maintain farms while also sweeping south with their herds during the harvest season. Competition among the tribes—for economic, not ethnic, reasons—has always been fierce, but tribal leaders customarily resolved these disputes, and their decisions were respected by the authorities in Khartoum.

In the nineteen-eighties, however, competition for land intensified. There was a regional drought, and the expanding Sahara began transforming arable soil into desert. The introduction of tractors and other mechanized farming equipment fed the ambition of some African farmers. Arab herders in North Darfur began to resent the seasonal forays of Zaghawa herdsmen into Arab-occupied grazing areas. African farmers grew hostile to the camel-riding Arab nomads from the north who increasingly trampled their farmland as they roamed in search of pasture. Arabs from countries to the west—Mauritania, Mali, Niger, and Chad—also began flooding the region, exacerbating the feuds. Farmers who had once celebrated the annual return of Arab nomads, whose animals had fertilized their farmland and helped carry their harvests to market, began to impede their migrations.

Instead of intervening to defuse these tensions, Khartoum's leaders essentially ignored them. A previous government had weakened the tribal-administration system, in favor of state institutions that had little legitimacy in Darfur. As a result, the region lacked a trusted system for resolving conflicts. The tribes grew more polarized, and they began gathering arms to defend their economic interests. Between 1987 and 1989, serious battles broke out between Fur farmers and Arab camel herders. Some twenty-five hundred Fur were killed, forty thousand cattle were lost, and four hundred villages were burned; five hundred Arabs died, and hundreds of the nomads' tents were burned. Even though a local intertribal conference was held in 1989, its recommendations for compensation and punishment went largely unheeded—leaving outstanding grievances that would explode fourteen years later.

At 5 A.M. on Friday, April 25, 2003, a blast shook a tiny, one-runway airport in El Fasher, the town of Amina's birth. It was followed by six rapid detonations. Sleeping Sudanese soldiers, who were encamped in a nearby garrison, awoke and scrambled out of their barracks toward an ammunition depot across the street. Many of the soldiers, some still in their nightclothes, were picked off by machine-gun fire as they ran. Rebel Darfurian marksmen were perched high in the trees.

The attackers, members of a then obscure group, the Sudanese Liberation Army, did damage far greater than their numbers or their reputation. Employing two hundred and sixty men, forty Toyota Land Cruisers, four trucks, and mainly small-arms fire, they managed to take over a vital military outpost. Because the attack occurred on a Friday, the day of prayer in Sudan, when many soldiers are home with their families, the Sudanese military had mounted

Musa Hilal, an instigator of the violence in Darfur, appears to have unlimited power there. Photograph by Evelyn Hockstein.

few patrols around the airport, and the rebels sneaked unchallenged onto the tarmac.

The raid, which lasted several hours, killed around a hundred soldiers. Five Antonov airplanes and two helicopter gunships were destroyed. (The government is said to have fewer than a hundred attack aircraft.) The rebels at first tried to disable the planes with haphazard gunfire; then someone shouted, "Hit the fuel tank," and the aircraft erupted in flames. The rebels also seized nineteen Land Cruisers and six trucks, and emptied several warehouses that were filled with weapons. (They almost made away with eight tanks, but they couldn't find the keys.) When the rebels left El Fasher, around midday, they had lost only nine men, and had kidnapped the head of the Sudanese Air Force, General Ibrahim Bushra Ismail, whom they released forty-five days later, after protracted negotiations with tribal leaders.

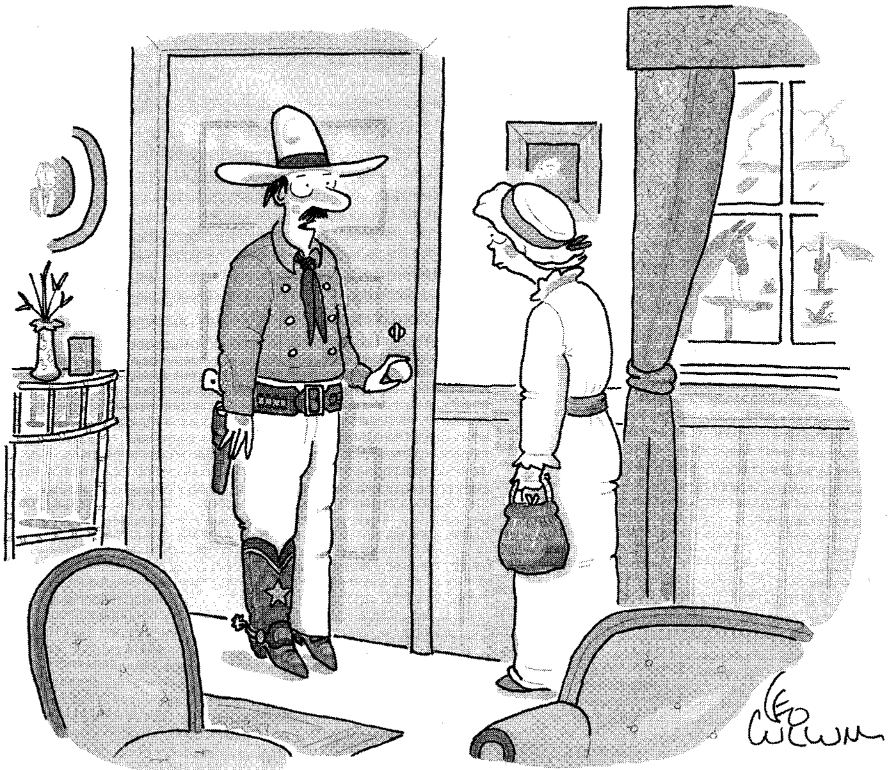
The rebel group, which was formed in February, 2003, had legitimate complaints. Darfur's inhabitants felt that the region was being ignored. The Sudanese government rarely paid for road building and repair, schools, hospitals, civil servants, or communications facilities in Darfur. Those who considered themselves ethnically African were angered by the government's practice of awarding most of the top posts in the region to local Arabs, even though they were thought to be the minority there. Disgruntled Darfurians had appealed to the government to include their concerns on the agenda of the U.S.-backed peace process. This effort failed, and many concluded that, if they ever wanted to see their needs met, they would have to do what John Garang had done in the South: take up arms against the Sudanese government and try to get the world's attention.

The Sudanese Liberation Army's founding manifesto, which was posted on the Internet and circulated by hand in Darfur, invited Arabs and Africans alike to join in protesting Khartoum's "policies of marginalization, racial discrimination, exclusion, exploitation, and divisiveness." The group's objective, it said, was "to create a united democratic Sudan on a new basis of equality, complete restructuring and devolution of power, even development, cultural and political pluralism and moral and material prosperity for all Sudanese." All regions should have significant autonomy and work together under the banner of "Sudanism"—a shared identity for Arabs, Africans, Christians, and Muslims. The S.L.A. attempted to demonstrate its inclusiveness by appointing an Arab, Ahmed Kabour Jibril, to be its commander in South Darfur.

At first, the Sudanese government did not take the S.L.A. seriously, and dismissed its demands. At a rally in El Fasher on April 12, 2003, President Bashir downplayed the rebellion, calling it "acts of armed banditry." Two weeks later, after the devastating airport raid, the government decided to treat the rebels as a major threat.

During the conflict with the rebels based in the South, the Sudanese military had honed a strategy for combatting insurgents: the Air Force bombed from the sky, while Arab tribesmen, armed by the government, launched raids on the ground. In Darfur, the Sudanese Army needed to rely even more heavily upon local Arab militias. A majority of the Army's rank-and-file soldiers were from Darfur, and they could not be trusted to take up arms against their neighbors and kin. (Many Darfurians had served with the Army in the war against Garang's rebels.) By July, 2003, the government was appealing to Darfur's Arab tribal leaders to defend their homeland against rebels whom they branded as "tora bora" (an allusion to the terrorist fighters based in the caves of Afghanistan).

Musa Hilal, a forty-three-year-old Arab sheikh, was one of the first to answer the government's call, and he soon became the coördinator of the *janjaweed* in Darfur. I met Hilal recently, at the Khartoum airport, outside a hangar for charter flights. It was 5:30 A.M. Hilal, who is six feet four and has an athletic, commanding build, wore a white turban over a white lace skullcap; a pale-blue, crisply starched djellabah with a white, black-striped gossamer sash; and dark-brown loafers. Hilal's skin is the color of sand—much lighter than that of most Arabs in Darfur—and he has bright hazel eyes, long, curly eyelashes, and a faint goatee. He has the confident gait of someone who has spent his life in charge. During our encounter, he carried only two items: a wooden walking stick capped with the head of a hound dog ("a gift from Switzerland") and a Nokia camera phone, which, when



"Pants in or out?"

opened, displayed a photograph of himself on its screen.

Hilal was named sheikh of his Arab tribe, the Um Jalloul, in 1984, when he was twenty-three. He claims that his appointment was the will of the people, but others told me that he bullied his way to the title, assaulting rival contenders. Hilal long had a reputation in Darfur as a troublemaker who instigated skirmishes against the Fur and other African tribes, with the aim of controlling more grazing land and amassing greater wealth for himself. But generally he enjoyed immunity. Indeed, the men under his command were notorious for the lengths to which they went to cover their trails. Ibrahim Suleiman, the former governor of North Darfur, told me that whenever one of Hilal's men died in an attack on a rival tribe he was beheaded by his fellow-tribesmen. The decapitated trunk was left at the scene, but the head was spirited away.

In the nineties, government officials tried repeatedly to have Hilal arrested. In 2002, they finally succeeded; Suleiman resorted to a tactic familiar to prosecutors of the Mafia—citing tax evasion, he detained Hilal. After being imprisoned for five months, Hilal was released on the condition that he would not return to Darfur. But, with the emergence of the S.L.A. rebellion, the government reassessed the situation, and decided to put Hilal's skills to use in Darfur. When Suleiman objected, he was fired. In 2003, with funds and arms from the government, Hilal set up a training camp near his home town of Mistiriyah, and rallied Arabs to the cause of suppressing the S.L.A. rebellion and populating the land with Arabs.

Hilal agreed to meet with me because he wanted to clear up the impression in the West that he is a *janjaweed.* When I mentioned the word, Hilal, who sees himself in regal terms, scoffed at what he considers a grave insult. In Sudan, nobody ever calls himself a *janjaweed.* Although many Africans in Darfur apply the term to any Arab civilian who carries a gun, government officials and Darfur's Arab-militia leaders, like Hilal, apply it only to the bandits—African and Arab—who have been hijacking and looting in Sudan's remote areas for decades. Western diplomats use "*janjaweed*" more broadly, to describe the Arab militiamen who have carried out much of the pillaging, killing, and raping in Darfur. These men, who receive orders on Thuraya satellite phones, have joined up with the Sudanese Air Force and Army, killing as many as fifty thousand Darfurians and destroying nearly four hundred villages. More than a million and a half people have fled from their homes—fifty refugee camps have been established in Chad, and a hundred and fifty unofficial sites have sprung up in Sudan—but this hasn't stopped the *janjaweed.* They continue to terrorize, murdering men and raping women who dare to venture outside the camps.

"Don't you people understand what a tribal leader does?" Hilal asked, tapping his walking stick on the floor. "I answered my government's appeal, and I called my people to arms. I didn't take up arms personally. A tribal leader doesn't take up arms. I am a sheikh. I am not a soldier." I asked him about eyewitness reports that he had participated in burning and looting in Darfur. He laughed and rolled his eyes. "That is rebel gossip-speak," he said. "The *janjaweed* have taken advantage of the troubles to pillage. I've had to fight them myself, as a tribal leader."

Hilal offered to take me and two colleagues on a tour of Darfur. The Sudanese government provided the transport—a sign of how entwined he is with the authorities. We flew the four hundred miles from Khartoum to the El Fasher airport in a government-chartered plane, an old Russian aircraft that had few windows and was sweltering inside. When we reached El Fasher, Hilal was embraced on the tarmac by the Sudanese colonel in charge of border intelligence. Then we piled into a military transport helicopter; incongruously, female flight attendants were on board, as was a box of Thuraya satellite phones and a cooler filled with soft drinks. The flight attendants and the cooler made the return journey; the phones did not.

As the helicopter swept over the decimated landscape, Hilal stared placidly out the window, seeming not to notice the blackened and emptied villages below—a bleakness interrupted only occasionally by a few, presumably Arab, villages where boys still herded animals in the fields and women washed clothes and gathered firewood. But these emblems of the selectivity of ethnic cleansing were not of concern to Hilal. He wanted to show us his harmonious ties with the African tribes of Darfur.

When our helicopter landed in the town of Kala, in North Darfur, more than a thousand people rushed out to greet us. As we disembarked, Hilal turned to us and said, sarcastically, "You're in my territory now. You're in territory under the control of the leader of the *janjaweed.*" A group of men strode forward, chanting "*Allahu akbar*"; they shouted praise for Hilal and shook walking sticks in the air. The women hung back and assembled in an orderly row; the collage of colors from their sarongs and scarves was blinding in the desert sunlight. A dozen or so of the women then performed a screeching song-and-dance number in Sheikh Hilal's honor.

When the welcomes subsided, Hilal led us underneath the largest tree in the semi-desert town, where we were served dates and orange Fanta. Tribal representatives rose to commend Hilal and the unity that he had fostered. "We live in harmony together in our different colors and tribes," one said. "We love each other. We marry each other. If you feel sick in one part of your body, you feel pain all over. We are like that here." Hilal, whose motions are deliberate and dramatic, tossed date pits onto a silver tray. He grew visibly impatient with the speeches and began barking commands to those around him as his supplicants droned on. "All of us have chosen a leader, the suitable man who will show us the good way," another said. "The man we have chosen is Musa Hilal. That's why we live here in peace."

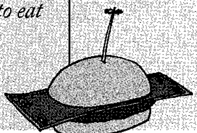
I showed Hilal a recent State Department map that depicted the hundreds of villages that had been destroyed and burned by combined *janjaweed* and Sudanese Air Force attacks. The map designated destroyed villages in Darfur with small orange-and-yellow flames. Hilal pointed to Kabkabiyeh, a town in North Darfur where there had recently been a lot of fighting, and where many flames were clustered on the map.

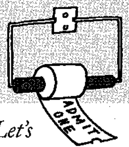
THE POLITICAL WORLD BY JON STEWART AND THE WRITERS OF “THE DAILY SHOW”

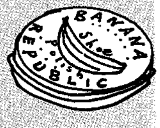
WHAT GOVERNMENT BEST SUITS YOU?

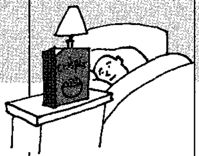
Wonderful as democracy is, it is only one of the many exciting options available to the discriminating “government hunter.” The following chart offers a helpful comparison among some of today’s most popular options—along with a sneak peek at what may very well be the government of the future!

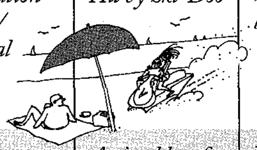
	Democracy	Totalitarian Regime	Theocracy	Socialist State	Third-World Resort Island	Post-Communist Kleptocracy	Military Junta
YOUR TYPICAL DAY	*Counting your money and deciding which fast food to eat*	*Marching, marching, marching*	*Avoiding the opposite sex while waiting quietly for death at the hands of American soldiers*	*Standing in line for tickets to the Toilet Paper Line*	*Earning $5 a day moving chairs around a pool for white kids who ask if you can get them pot*	*Managing Ukrainian prostitutes by day, planning your coup by night*	*Polishing the Colonel’s boots*
YOUR FAVORITE KIND OF WAR	*A glorious battle for liberty, preferably fought by proxy army*	*Seizing territory necessary for new and bigger monuments to the Beloved Despot*	*One loosely resembling prophesy in religious texts*	*Let’s check in with local Revolutionary Council*	*Any war where you get to kill whitey*	*Civil war between the power company and the phone company*	*Favorite kind?*
YOUR STANDARD BREAKFAST	*Crispix*	*Tree-bark frittata*	*Blood of firstborn son*	*Vodka*	*Table scraps from last night’s All-Inclusive Caribbonanza*	*Crispix*	*Chilequiles*
HOW ARE YOU MOST LIKELY TO DIE?	*Ski-Doo accident*	*Pick one: killed by enemy soldiers, killed by own soldiers*	*Bunker-buster*	*Combination boredom/ industrial mishap*	*Hit by Ski-Doo*	*Stabbed in own basement casino*	*Jungle rot*
WHY ARE YOU BEING JAILED?	*Possession of marijuana with intent to sell*	*Poor dancing at Dear Leader’s birthday extravaganza*	*Apostasy*	*First-degree yard sale*	*Arrived late for dishwashing shift*	*You were late mailing your bribe*	*Your grandfather’s brother backed the wrong side*
YOUR PET PEEVES	*Voting*	*Figuring out what to do with your life*	*Having to leave the courthouse to talk to a priest*	*Money*	*They had to call it “Paradise Island”?*	*Having to leave the courthouse to buy heroin*	*Where’s a checkpoint when you need one?*
WHAT’S YOUR TAKE ON GENITAL MUTILATION?	*Foreskin is gross/hilarious. Off with it*	*Only for Olympic athletes*	*Why stop at the genitals?*	*I support mutilating people’s genitals if it helps the people*	*I’d like to mutilate the genitals of the guy in the Piña Colada Suite*	*Is there money in it?*	*Sounds more fun than it really is*
YOU HATE AMERICA BECAUSE . . .	*Sales tax*	*Propaganda doesn’t lie*	*The Great Satan exports misery and irresistible dance music*	*They’re capitalist pigs . . . and they won’t trade with us*	*“Wild On” . . . crew stiffed you for tip*	*Anti-piracy DVD technology*	*They only sent you 50 fighter planes this year*
FAVORITE PUNK-ROCK BAND	*Circle Jerks*	*Dead Kennedys*	*Early Black Flag*	*Ramones*	*Sex Pistols*	*The Clash*	*Does Pavement count?*

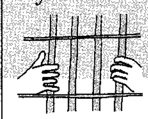


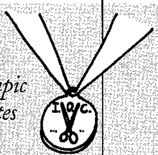


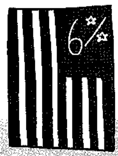


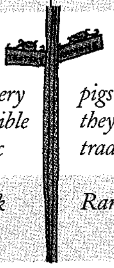


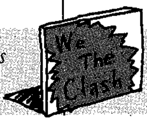


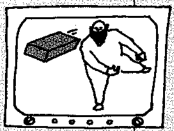
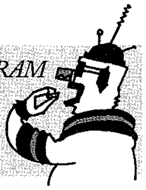
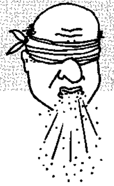
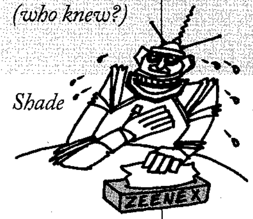










Constitutional Sultanate	Occupied Territory	Constitutional Robocracy
Lounging around His Excellency's disco, awaiting fondling	*So many rocks, so little time* 	*Obeying the robots*
Pillow fight	*Anything in front of the cameras*	*Disobeying the robots*
Belgium waffle w/fruit, pecans, birth-control pill	*Gravel sausage*	*RAM* 
Forgot S & M "safe word"	 *Sneezing at checkpoint*	*Body energy over-siphoned by the robots . . . the horrible, horrible robots*
You won't wear the sheer pants	*Rock you threw actually hit soldier (who knew?)*	*Laughter/weeping*
Choosing your own mate	*Shade*  	*Being carbon-based*
Only way to make a eunuch	*As long as it doesn't hinder my rock-throwing*	*Anything to feel again*
The carpeting of their whorish blondes fails to match the drapes	*Shrapnel in your bedroom reads "Lockheed Martin"*	*America?!?*
Rage Against the Machine	*Social Distortion*	*Devo*

MICHAEL CRAWFORD

"Yes," he said, nodding. "This is where the government clashed with the rebels and aerial bombardment occurred." Then he squinted and gave the map a disapproving glance. "Many more villages have been destroyed than this!" he said. "What about Korma?" he asked. "Why is there no flame there?" I gave him my pen and urged him to demarcate his area of dominion. He drew a large triangle within which there was not a single flame marker.

Suddenly, Hilal turned toward the proceedings and cut off the elderly African man who was heaping encomiums upon him. "Let's have a woman speaker," Hilal snapped, in Arabic. Two women came forward; predictably, one was an African Fur, the other an Arab.

Hilal appears to have unlimited power in Darfur. A statement from local authorities in February instructed "security units in the locality" to "allow the activities of the mujahideen and the volunteers under the command of Sheikh Musa Hilal to proceed" in North Darfur and "to secure their vital needs." The document stressed the "importance of non-interference" and directed local authorities to "overlook minor offences by the mujahideen against civilians who are suspected members of the rebellion."

Later, in Khartoum, I met with Salah Abdallah Gosh, the head of the National Security and Intelligence Service, in his office. "Musa Hilal is not a criminal," Gosh said. Western diplomats say that Gosh is one of the principal architects of Khartoum's war in Darfur; he had never before granted an interview to a Western journalist. "The non-Arabs passed the Americans wrong information. They said, 'Musa Hilal is the leader of the *janjaweed*.' But he is not. He is a leader of the Arab tribes. Musa Hilal is not a man who would burn down a village and kill the people and take their money. He is not like that. He was invited by the government to back the government Army, and he gave the people guns and leadership."

While in Khartoum, I also met with Mustafa, an eighteen-year-old from Kabkabiyeh, who had briefly trained with Hilal's militia. (He asked that his last name be withheld.) In October, 2003, because of the fighting around his home town, Mustafa's school was closed. That December, he said, Hilal put out a call to young men in the area to attend a military camp in Mistiriyah, promising guns and a salary equivalent to ninety-five dollars per month. Although Mustafa is from an African tribe, he signed up; his parents were aghast. "You are going to join the *janjaweed*?" his mother said. "You are African, they are Arab. They will kill you." Mustafa, who believed what he had been told by the town recruiter, insisted that he was not becoming a *janjaweed* but, rather, was joining multi-ethnic "border forces," which would bring peace to the area.

In January, Mustafa and several hundred other youths boarded trucks that took them to the bustling Mistiriyah camp, where about five thousand fighters were said to be training. To Mustafa's frustration, they were not immediately armed. "Musa Hilal is the only one who can distribute weapons," the youths were told. Five days after they arrived, a Sudanese military-transport helicopter landed, and Hilal emerged from his tent, nearby. He presided over the unloading of twelve boxes of Kalashnikov and G3 rifles, Mustafa said, but he did not use the occasion to welcome the new cadets; instead, he returned to his tent for a feast. This time, the boys were told that they would get guns only when they embarked upon an official *mumariya*, a military mission.

Mustafa was already growing restless when some two thousand Arab militiamen returned to Mistiriyah from the field. The commanders arrived first, in eight Land Cruisers. More than a thousand men followed on horseback, with the remainder on camels or on foot. The camels were weighted down with chairs, bed frames, blankets, radios, suitcases filled with valuables—even the doors of houses. The fighters also brought hundreds of sheep, goats, and cows. The men paraded around the camp singing songs lampooning the Africans of Sudan. A few men who knew that Mustafa was African teased him, saying, "We are the lords of this land. You blacks don't have any rights here." He was told that the Arabs would be sent to attack local villages and civilians, while Africans like him would be sent into high-risk conventional battle with the S.L.A. rebels—their ethnic kin. After two weeks in the camp, Mustafa had

"We met online."

seen enough. He fled and has been in hiding ever since.

A week later, in South Darfur, I met Mahasin Abaker, the wife of Khadir Ali Abdul Rahman Hussein Abukoda, who was a prominent local leader of the Fur tribe. She was at home with her husband on March 27th, when Hilal stormed into town wearing a Sudanese Army uniform with two stripes and an eagle. A military vehicle arrived at the front door, and Khadir was taken away. Soon thereafter, Mahasin recalled, Hilal's *janjaweed* horsemen and camel riders began looting, stripping shops and houses bare, even seizing the carpet from the local mosque. Khadir never returned home, and his wife feared that he had been killed. In April, though, Mahasin received a note from him, in which he said that he was being held by Hilal. On May 19th, one of Hilal's officials sent a ransom note to the local emir of the Fur. "Concerning Khadir, if you want him released, send ten million Sudanese pounds"—four thousand dollars. "For the urgent resolution of this matter, please send the money as soon as possible. If you do not, his fate will be in your hands." The ransom note, which Mahasin showed me, was signed by the office of military intelligence in Mistiriyah. So far, Khadir's tribe has been able to raise only 7.5 million Sudanese pounds.

As Hilal's forces have expanded their zone of power, they have targeted Arabs as well as Africans. In May, some three thousand fighters arrived in the village of Khar Ramla. Witnesses told me that Hilal, this time dressed in a green camouflage Sudanese military uniform, summoned the male villagers to a meeting at sunset in a warehouse on the outskirts of the village. When the men arrived, they were surrounded by Hilal's gunmen and told that they could not leave. For the next four hours, the men heard the sound of the militiamen firing their guns and the screams of the women. The village was looted, and at least nine women were raped.

During our encounter, Hilal expressed disgust at the idea that his men would stoop so low as to commit rape, but his forces have been repeatedly accused of this crime. In February, the town of Tawilla, forty miles southwest of El Fasher, and its surrounding villages were attacked by Hilal's forces, witnesses said; seventy-five people were killed, and more than a hundred women and girls were raped—six of them in front of their fathers. A UNICEF study found that some girls were raped by as many as fourteen men. Surviving villagers told international investigators that, in addition, a hundred and fifty women and two hundred children had been abducted. Their whereabouts are unknown.

After meeting Amina Abaker Mohammed in Chad, I decided to travel, along with John Prendergast, of the International Crisis Group, to see the wells in Furawiyah where she said her son had been killed by *janjaweed* forces. In order to make our way to Furawiyah, which was in an area said to be in rebel hands, we had to cross the Chad-Sudan border illegally. The Chadian authorities had tightened up their border patrols in order to stop the *janjaweed* from crossing into Chad, to chase refugees and to loot villages. (In June, Chadian forces killed sixty-nine *janjaweed* who had attacked the village of Birak, which is four miles inside Chad.) Not surprisingly, it has proved impossible for the Chadian authorities to seal the eight-hundred-mile desert frontier. As a result, our only real challenge was scaling a steep wadi in an aging Land Cruiser. This done, we began the long, slow drive through the Sahara toward Furawiyah.

Our journey across the inhospitable terrain of northern Sudan resembled a virtual tour of the solar system: we saw the soft yellow powder of Earth's great deserts; the red-rock mounds of Mars; the volcanic gravel of Venus; the deep gray craters and gullies of Mercury. The hundred-and-thirty-degree heat, along with the terror inflicted by the *janjaweed* and the Air Force planes, had driven human life either into exile or into hiding. We felt utterly alone.

After five hours on the road, having advanced at less than ten m.p.h. and having seen only scattered camel carcasses, we suddenly glimpsed a procession of men and horses on the horizon, minuscule amid the expanse of desert. As we approached, we saw fourteen men making their way east with walking sticks in the scorching afternoon sun. Five horses hauled trailers piled high with rugs, sacks of millet, and various household necessities. The horses were so emaciated that their pelvic bones stuck out sharply.

The men were participating in a kind of underground railroad. They were Darfurian refugees, now living in tents in Chad; together, they had rented the horses and the trailers and stocked them with emergency food stores, which they were delivering to their kin who remained trapped in Darfur—those too old, scared, or infirm to make the trek. Once the refugees had emptied their load, they would travel for eight days to get back to Chad, carrying on the trailers people who wished to escape.

One of the men, Mahmoud Ibrahim Mustafa, who is thirty-eight, was making his second trip. He had already collected his two wives and seven children; now he was returning to gather his brother and sister-in-law and their seven children. S.L.A. officials claim that hundreds of thousands of people are hiding out in Darfur. Since many of them left their stores of grain behind and were robbed of their animals, they may be at risk of starvation.

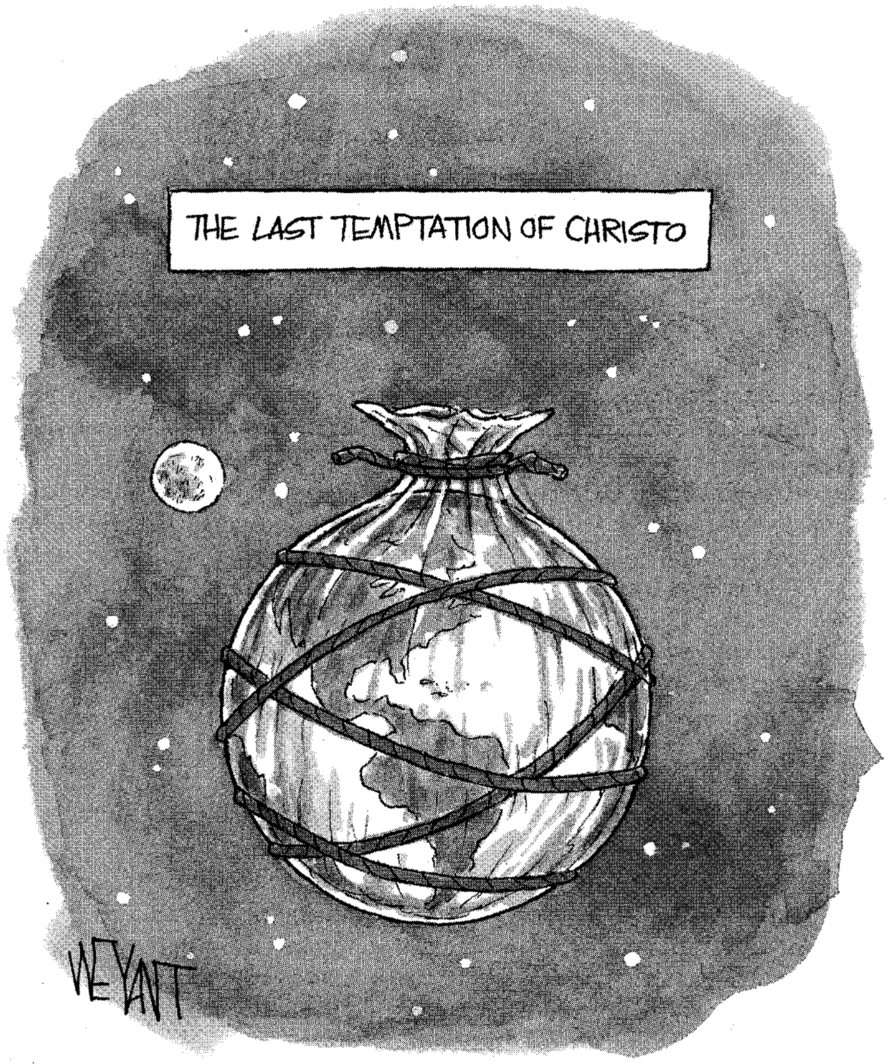
The next day, as we drove deeper into Darfur, we came to the Zaghawa village of Hangala. Zaghawa villages are constructed functionally and hierarchically. The head of the household occupies a small, round stone hut, which is sealed with a conical thatched roof. The hut is around fifteen feet in diameter and sits in the center of the family compound. Around this hut are as many as seven smaller huts—one for each of the man's wives. The compound is enclosed by a fence, which is built of either straw or tree branches.

At Hangala, we found only the stone walls of the huts, which had been set ablaze. Each was filled with two feet of ashes; without their thatched roofs, the charred huts resembled beheaded figures. In the burned remains of Hangala—a village that had never had running water or electricity, and that was accessible only by following tire tracks in the thick sand—we came across the remnants of a jewelry box, a bicycle, women's slippers, and bottles of French perfume. The residents' animal and land holdings had made them comparatively rich, and this wealth had made them an inevitable target for the marauders. Of the four hundred and eighty people who lived in Hangala before the attack, we were later told, forty-six were killed. The rest are now homeless, scattered throughout Sudan and Chad.

The village abutting Hangala had been ransacked but not burned, perhaps because the attackers had wanted someplace to sleep the night of their rampage. One hut contained a child's backpack and his "Duckzilla" notebooks, which contained exercises in mathematics, Islamic studies, and Arabic. In another house, we found small packages of beans and nuts, a sign that the inhabitants had fled in a hurry, and a branding iron. As we left one of the huts, where pots had been overturned and valuables looted, we spotted three toothbrushes tucked into the thatch in the roof. Nestled next to them was a sheet of paper that had been folded into tight squares; upon opening it, we saw that it was a prayer from the Koran, urging Allah to keep watch over the family home.

Furawiyah was less than an hour's drive from Hangala, but before entering town we had to "register" with S.L.A. rebels, who manned a base on the outskirts. The S.L.A. commander in Furawiyah, a lanky thirty-eight-year-old Zaghawa wearing Army fatigues, a bright-yellow turban, and wraparound Ray-Bans, was lounging on a rug in the shade when we pulled up to the base. Under a nearby tree, unguarded, was a stack of a dozen or so rocket-propelled grenades. On his rug lay a laminated package of hot-pink pills. "They are malaria pills," the commander explained. "We stole them from the government. Everything we have we have stolen from the government." He didn't have malaria and, in this malaria-free area, stood little chance of catching it. He was just flaunting the fruits of victory.

I asked to be directed to the wells where Amina had collected water. As we drove toward them, with a local guide, we passed a large gray rocket that was partly lodged in the sand; this was the undetonated Sudanese Air Force rocket that Amina had described to me. We also passed an enormous crater, at least twenty-five feet in diameter and five feet deep, where another bomb had exploded. Antonovs are imprecise bombers, and the Sudanese Air Force crew simply heave


THE LAST TEMPTATION OF CHRISTO
WEYANT

their munitions out the planes' trapdoors. As a result, the planes have proved bad at killing S.L.A. rebels but good at bluntly wiping out civilian life.

"Here are the wells," our guide said as we pulled up to the red-rock hillock that Amina had depicted on a map she had drawn for me. I saw only more Sahara sand at the base of the rock. "What wells?" I asked. The guide kept pointing to the same patch of desert, and, frustrated, I stepped closer. There, barely visible beneath the pale-yellow sand, were the faint outlines of one large stone well and two smaller ones. This was where Amina and Mohammed had watered their animals, and where Amina had found the corpses of her slain neighbors and the head of her son. The *janjaweed* had buried the wells and their victims beneath many feet of sand. In so doing, they had not only made it more difficult for their crimes to be investigated; they had also destroyed vital water sources. Among the twenty-five wells in the Furawiyah area, only three were left unmolested—and those may soon dry up, owing to overuse.

The killers in Darfur are not always so careful. The young man who showed us the wells urged us to accompany him on a short drive outside Furawiyah. Fifteen minutes after leaving the town, he told us to park our Land Cruiser at the base of a slope and ascend by foot. The stench of decomposing flesh greeted us before we saw that rotting bodies were lying in the gullies on either side of us. There were the bodies of fourteen men, dressed in bloodied djellabahs or in shirts and slacks. Seventeen bullet casings lay scattered around them. The victims appeared to have been driven to this remote spot—the deep tread of vehicle tires was still visible—and then divided into two groups and lined up in front of the ditches. They had all been shot from behind, except for one man. His body lay not in a ditch but in the center of the slope, and one of his palms was outstretched, as if he were pleading for mercy.

Neither President Bush nor Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, spoke publicly about the killings in Darfur before March of this year, by which time some thirty thousand people had died as a result of ethnic cleansing. Thanks to the relentless efforts of Andrew Natsios and Roger Winter, two officials at the United States Agency for International Development, the U.S. government had begun attempting to deliver humanitarian aid to Darfur in February, 2003. But the Administration's top officials remained quiet. Cabinet members were, of course, preoccupied with Iraq, but even Washington diplomats who monitored Sudan chose not to speak out, for fear of upsetting the North-South peace process. By this time, some hundred thousand Darfurians had fled to Chad, in addition to the million or so people who had been displaced within Darfur—yet the North-South negotiations continued, as if nothing unusual were happening elsewhere in Sudan.

Last March, the U.N.'s humanitarian coördinator for Sudan, Mukesh Kapila, who had served a year there without denouncing Darfur's horrors, erupted. "The only difference between Rwanda and Darfur is the numbers involved of dead, tortured, and raped," Kapila said at the final press conference he gave before leaving his post. He told the BBC, "This is ethnic cleansing, this is the world's greatest humanitarian crisis, and I don't know why the world is not doing more about it." Kapila's statement was well timed. The following month, the world's leaders were to commemorate the ten-year anniversary of the systematic slaughter of eight hundred thousand Rwandans. Both Bush and Annan would have to issue statements on Rwanda, and the media interest aroused by Kapila's declaration made it impossible for the two leaders to avoid the subject of Darfur. In a statement on April 7th, Bush condemned the "atrocities" in Darfur, saying, "The government of Sudan must not remain complicit in the brutalization of Darfur." Annan went further, raising the possibility of "military action." In May, Natsios and Winter issued a grim mortality survey predicting that, even if world leaders substantially increased aid to Darfur, three hundred thousand people would be dead by December. If world leaders ignored Sudan, they warned, a million could die.

The international media was extremely slow to post journalists to the region. Those who went tended to remain at the Chad border, for the Sudanese government often denied journalists' visa requests. But in May firsthand reports from Darfur began appearing, and the editorial boards of the Washington *Post* and the New York *Times* regularly publicized the crisis. Between April 1st and August 19th, the *Post* ran twelve editorials. The *Times* ran only four, but its columnist Nicholas Kristof travelled twice to the Chad-Sudan border and wrote ten passionate columns about the atrocities.

On Capitol Hill, where interest in Sudan's oppression of Christians had always been high, members of Congress finally shifted their focus to Darfur. "We were late," Frank Wolf, a Republican congressman from Virginia, told me. "We so wanted to get peace in the South that it was like the Simon and Garfunkel song: 'A man hears what he wants to hear and disregards the rest.' " Wolf and Sam Brownback, a Republican senator from Kansas, visited Darfur in June and returned with grim refugee testimonies and video footage of torched villages. In July, Congress passed a resolution, introduced by Donald Payne, a Democratic congressman from New Jersey, to describe the killings in Sudan as "genocide"—the first time that Congress had described an ongoing massacre in such terms.

Bush's evangelical base offered full backing. That same month, Franklin Graham called the White House and told one of Bush's aides, "Just because you've signed a peace deal with the South doesn't mean you can wash your hands of Darfur." Samaritan's Purse, Graham's charity, is now transporting food aid by plane from Khartoum to Darfur. "Killing is wrong, whether you're killing a Jew, a Christian, or a Muslim," Graham told me. "I'm as concerned about what's happening in Darfur as I am about what happened in southern Sudan. It's evil. God made the people there in Darfur. For us to ignore them would be a sin." In August, fifty-one evangelical Christian leaders, representing forty-five thousand churches, called on the President to consider sending troops to Darfur to stop the "genocide."

For many African-American leaders, the targeting of Darfurians on the basis of ethnicity has rekindled memories of apartheid. On July 13th, Charles Rangel, the New York City congressman, and fifty protesters sang "We Shall Overcome" and were arrested in front of the Sudanese Embassy in Washington. "We acted too late to save millions of Jews during World War II," Rangel said. "We didn't act at all when hundreds of thousands of innocents were slaughtered in Rwanda. We have the opportunity now to stop a genocide and we must act." Numerous other protesters were arrested in July, including Bobby Rush, a Democratic congressman from Illinois; Joe Hoeffel, a Democratic congressman from Pennsylvania; Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield, the co-founders of Ben & Jerry's, the ice-cream company; Rabbi David Saperstein, from New York; and four grandmothers from the Washington area.

In the end, America contributed $192.4 million in relief aid, pressed for multilateral U.N. denunciations, and dispatched Secretary of State Colin Powell to Darfur. The U.S. even compiled a kind of "Most Wanted" list of *janjaweed* leaders, who it said should be arrested and tried. No. 1 on that list was Musa Hilal.

"Please—sit anywhere."

Sudanese officials like Salah Gosh have developed two methods for deflecting American criticism. First, they meet every charge with a reference to the quagmire in Iraq. In Khartoum, when I asked Gosh about the Sudanese attacks on civilians, he told me that armies are made up of individuals. "In Abu Ghraib, there are violations by the U.S. Army," he said. "But the violations are not from the whole Army. The violations are from individuals. You cannot generalize." When I asked why Sudan had not complied with American demands that it disarm the *janjaweed*, he said, "The United States is facing those terrorist people in Iraq. Is it possible for the United States to disarm those criminals? Is it possible for the United States, with all of its equipment—it is a superpower—to disarm these people in one month, two years? Danforth stands there in the United States and says, 'The government of Sudan has just a few days to control the *janjaweed* and to stop those attacks.' If it's so easy, why don't you do it in Iraq?"

When I broached the prospect of international intervention, he said, "It will make things worse. People in Sudan do not like foreigners to control them. They would love to fight them. The United States should take care of the information it is building its decisions on. We have lots of cases where the United States was fooled by bad information—the bombing of the Al Shifa factory, the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq . . . We told the United States, 'We have bin Laden in Sudan. We can monitor him and divert his efforts.' They ignored our claim. We were told to send him out. What is the loss for the United States? How many people died?"

The government in Khartoum has also attempted to hide the evidence of its ethnic-cleansing campaign. It has integrated the *janjaweed* into the regular Army and police forces, pretended to arrest and prosecute war criminals, and tried to break up large camps of displaced persons.

Sudanese officials say that some eight thousand new police officers are starting to patrol Darfur. But refugees told me that they recognize many of these policemen as former *janjaweed*. Around the town of Kas, in South Darfur, where forty thousand refugees had taken shelter inside and outside local schools, the new police were visible. But it was clear that they had not been trained. One policeman, riding a camel, was wearing the navy-blue trousers of the Sudanese police and the green camouflage top of the Sudanese Army. Others were loitering in the Kas market wearing crisp blue police uniforms, but their turbans, the rifles slung over their shoulders, and their flip-flops gave them away as former *janjaweed*. In the local parlance, they had been "re-hatted."

When I met with Salah Gosh, on July 11th, he said that forty-six *janjaweed* had been arrested in Darfur. A week later, a government official upped the number to sixty-seven. The state-owned media reported that in Nyala, a town in South Darfur, ten *janjaweed* had been sentenced to amputation of their right hands and left feet for their role in recent assaults. To confirm this, I scheduled an appointment with Nyala's top judge and got his permission to visit the jail on July 21st. He presented me with files on the recently arrested. Seventeen *janjaweed* had been convicted so far, he said, and nineteen were awaiting trial. "This isn't just talk," he said, handing me the indictments. "This is proof." The documents were neatly filled out, and each listed the name of the prisoner and the section of the criminal code that had been violated. But when I looked more closely the papers seemed suspicious: every one of the nineteen new arrivals was said to have been processed on July 14th and was scheduled to begin trial on July 30th. I made my way into the prison courtyard, where sixty-three inmates were gathered. The men who had already been convicted were sitting cross-legged on the right side, wearing mud-brown prison uniforms, and those awaiting trial sat on the left, dressed in grimy white djellabahs. The prison director urged me to question them. I asked how many had been arrested in 2004. Only four men raised their hands. Who had been accused of rape? None. Had any of them arrived at the jail on July 14th? No. Had any of them even been arrested in the past three months? No. The Sudanese government was attempting to pass off criminals arrested several years ago as *janjaweed* but hadn't informed the prisoners of the ploy.

CLASSMATE

I was walking toward her, carrying a half-opened rose.
I was riding, because it was a long journey.

Through a labyrinth of escalators, from a pit to a pit,
In the company of several phantasmagoric ladies.

She was stretched on a carpet, receiving guests,
Her neck a lily of immaculate whiteness.

Please kneel here, she said, next to me,
We are going to talk about the good and the beautiful.

She was gifted, produced graphomaniac poems.
This happened in another country, in a lost century.

She used to wear a student cap adorned with wolf's teeth,
An emblem of our alma mater sewn into the velvet.

No doubt she married, had three children.
Who can track down these details?

While in South Darfur, I also visited Sania Deleiba, a village south of Nyala, which was once home to four hundred and seventy-four families. In May, witnesses told me, government and *janjaweed* forces attacked, killing twelve people and looting and burning virtually all the houses. This summer, the government promised to provide monthly food supplies and an official police presence, and more than two hundred families returned. When I toured the village, residents explained that they had been unable to obtain food in Nyala or in the refugee camp in nearby Kalma. They said they thought they might still be able to plant in time for the August rains.

It is no accident that this tiny village was chosen as the site for such a pilot—or, more likely, Potemkin—program. Sania Deleiba is an easy ride from Nyala, one of the few Darfur towns with an airport, on roads that will remain passable throughout the rainy season. International dignitaries could be escorted there for short visits, and they would find battered but resilient Africans living alongside their Arab neighbors.

None of this means that Sania Deleiba is a safe place to be. When I visited, the police were scattered about the town's perimeter, but they looked incredulous when I asked if they would try to arrest any *janjaweed*, some of whom had been seen lurking on horseback nearby. "No way," one said. "We hope that when they see us they won't attack. But if they do there's nothing much we can do."

On numerous occasions, the Sudanese government has threatened to force people in the camps to go home, but the U.N. has insisted on a voluntary-return policy. As a result, in August there were a number of incidents in which masked gunmen swept into camps in the middle of the night and abducted village leaders. The leaders returned the next morning, limping and bruised, saying that their assailants had threatened to kill them if they didn't take their people home.

In Kas, the town where schools had become impromptu shelters, officials were determined to move displaced people to a nearby swampy area, where they would be separated from the town by a wadi. Several police tents had been set up in the swamp, in order to create the impression of a secure environment. But, as I talked with the policemen inside one tent, a forbidding trio of men on camelback carrying G3 rifles rode by outside. I pointed to the *janjaweed* and asked the policemen, who were African, if they would make arrests if they learned of attacks on the refugees. "We don't have instructions to arrest them," one said. "If we captured them, we would be sacked." Another added, "There are six of us here and thousands of them. They have heavy weapons and modern weapons, and we have these old Kalashnikovs. If we arrest one of them, they'll come after our families." The policemen said that the government had given each of them only one gun cartridge.

Soon after Colin Powell's visit to Sudan this summer, the government relaxed its visa and travel requirements, and the number of expatriate aid workers leaped from three dozen, in March, to nearly five hundred, in August. The U.N., which had established a food program in Darfur, expanded its scope, reaching nine hundred thousand of the estimated one and a half million in need. Nonetheless, the displaced continued to live in deplorable conditions. In the camps, sanitation was poor, raising worries about outbreaks of cholera and measles. Residents remained vulnerable to constant *janjaweed* attacks. And they still had no prospect of returning home to safety; *janjaweed* assaults on African villages continued.

Does the dream mean I desired her?
Or just felt pity for her former body?

So that it falls to me to count her scattered bones
Since I am the last from among that gang of youths from a century past?

A descent into a Dantesque dark hollow
Somewhere near Archangel or in Kazakhstan?

She should have been buried in the cemetery at Rossa,
But an evil fate no doubt carried her out of town.

Why her precisely, I don't understand.
I'm not sure I'd recognize her on a busy street.

And I ask myself why it is constructed so perversely:
So that life is vague and only death is real.

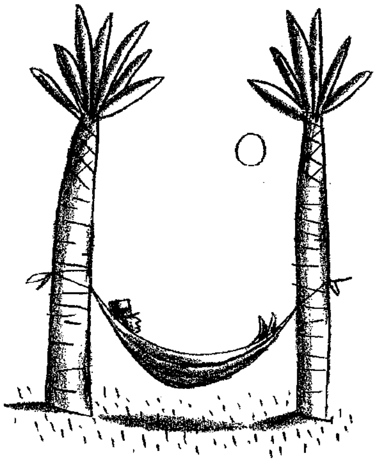
Farewell, Piorewiczowna, unasked-for shadow.
I don't even remember your first name.

—*Czeslaw Milosz*

(Translated, from the Polish, by the author and Robert Hass.)

Not long after Powell's visit, I went to the refugee camp in Kalma, where thirty-five thousand displaced persons have arrived just since June. New residents had taken up patches of land at the edge of the camp, and, using grass and acacia branches, were beginning the meticulous process of assembling their new homes. Some hunted fruitlessly for plastic sheeting or clothing that could shield their families during the nightly downpours. The new arrivals shared familiar tales of attacks by the *janjaweed* and the Sudanese military.

Throughout the crisis in Darfur, the government's agenda has remained obscure. Why, exactly, has it armed and funded the *janjaweed*, bombed African villages, and purged or killed so many non-Arabs? One theory holds that the slaughter and deportations in Darfur are part of a master plan that was hatched in the late nineteen-eighties, by political hard-liners, to "Arabize" Sudan. Around that time, Colonel Muammar Qaddafi, of Libya, began promoting "Arabism" as a political ideology in sub-Saharan Africa, backing armed Arab rebels in the region and fostering grander dreams of an "Arab belt." In October, 1987, twenty-three Arab intellectuals sent a letter to Sadiq al-Mahdi, Sudan's Prime Minister at the time. The letter, which was published in the local press, credited the "Arab race" with the "creation of civilization in the region . . . in the areas of governance, religion and language." The signatories demanded a larger proportion of local, state, and national jobs, warning, "If this neglect of the participation of the Arab race continues, things will break loose from the hands of the wise men to those of the ignorant." Soon afterward, the process of removing Africans from senior civil posts in Darfur and replacing them with Arabs began. The current assaults on Darfurians who are considered "black" are thought by some to be phase two of Sudan's Arabization plan.



A second theory, which is slightly kinder to the leaders in Khartoum, holds that the Sudanese government, which in 2002 had just agreed to grant a right of secession to rebels in the South, could not afford to placate another rebel group. To do so would have emboldened disaffected minorities throughout the vast country, ultimately unravelling the patchwork state of Sudan. The government was particularly reluctant to lose Darfur, a Muslim territory. It therefore decided to quash the rebellion, gambling that Musa Hilal and other Arab tribal leaders in Darfur, as well as Arab-immigrant fighters, would serve as reliable proxies. (In return, the Arab militias could freely plunder villages.) The Sudanese government could hardly have predicted that an obscure, inaccessible Muslim region like Darfur would become a cause célèbre in America. Nor could it necessarily have expected that, even after it had emptied out more than half of Darfur's African villages, the *janjaweed* would continue attacking so many civilians.

Regardless of whether Sudan's murderous campaign in Darfur stems from a racist conspiracy, a counter-insurgency strategy run amok, or a combination of the two, its policies deserve to be condemned. Yet international opinion has been strangely divided. Europe's lingering hostility to the Bush Administration over the invasion of Iraq seems to have infected its response to Darfur. In April, at a meeting at the U.N. Human Rights Commission, in Geneva, European diplomats opposed a strong American denunciation of the atrocities, preferring a resolution so watered down that Sudan welcomed it. At a time when America had given twenty-eight million dollars to the U.N.'s Darfur relief program, Germany had given one million dollars, and France nothing.

European officials have also been unduly trusting of Khartoum's assurances that it intends to solve the crisis. This summer, Renaud Muselier, the French secretary of state for foreign affairs, argued publicly that the Americans were overreacting. He invoked recent comments of Kofi Annan, who said that the killings and purgings in Darfur were only "bordering on ethnic

"I don't think you're getting enough stress."

cleansing." Muselier told Radio France, "Kofi Annan, who is very careful in his choice of words . . . has said very clearly that this was not genocide. That is what I also believe." When asked if the atrocities in Darfur constituted ethnic cleansing, he said, "No, I firmly believe it is a civil war." The Sudan *Vision*, a government-controlled newspaper, hailed the French stand, crediting Paris with "slamming U.S. foreign policy."

The State Department has stopped short of calling the atrocities in Darfur genocide, but Pierre-Richard Prosper, the U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for War Crimes Issues, has pointed to "indicators of genocide." The campaign of massacres, rapes, and ethnic cleansing may well fit the definition of genocide established by the Genocide Convention, which does not require a Rwanda-style extermination campaign but, rather, an attempt to "destroy" a substantial "part" of a group "as such." But genocide is a crime based on intent, and pinpointing who has acted with the goal of destroying Darfur's non-Arab groups will remain difficult unless investigators dig up the wells, examine the ravines, apprehend perpetrators, and ascertain the command-and-control relationships among Sudanese leaders, Air Force pilots, and Arab militiamen. This will not happen soon: the major powers have not established an intelligence-gathering operation in Darfur that is sophisticated enough to gauge either the death toll or the intentions of perpetrators. In the meantime, the debate over semantics has only further distracted the international community from the more important debate about how to save lives.

In late July, the U.N. Security Council passed a resolution imposing an arms embargo on the *janjaweed* and the S.L.A. rebels, and threatening the Sudanese government with "further action," such as an asset freeze or a travel ban, if it did not show substantial progress within thirty days in disarming the *janjaweed* and bringing war criminals to justice. But the Sudanese government has made it clear that it will not disarm Musa Hilal or other Arab tribal leaders. The Arab tribes have carried guns for decades, and they would never give them up. Moreover, if they did, Arab civilians could be left vulnerable to revenge attacks by aggrieved Africans.

What is most needed in Darfur is an international peacekeeping and protection presence, and this is what the Sudanese government most wants to avoid. When Britain and Australia announced in July that they were considering sending troops for peacekeeping, a Sudanese group calling itself Mohammed's Army appealed to young Muslims to fight the arriving foreigners. "We call upon you to head immediately to Darfur and dig the ground deep for the mass graves for the crusader army," one recruiting statement said. Musa Hilal, who in recent months had been lying low in Khartoum, reportedly returned to his base in Mistiriyah to begin training his troops for clashes with foreign peacekeepers.

The most realistic hope for peacekeepers comes from the fifty-three-member African Union. In April, the S.L.A. and the Sudanese government signed a temporary ceasefire, and the A.U. agreed to send a hundred and twenty unarmed monitors to Darfur. It was a hopelessly small number, given the size of the region, and those observers were slow to deploy. Moreover, the A.U. officials were limited to investigating violations of the ceasefire. They weren't supposed to combat the biggest threat: *janjaweed* and military attacks on Darfur civilians. In August, Rwanda and Nigeria agreed to send a hundred and fifty soldiers each to Darfur, and the A.U. countries are pushing for permission to send several thousand more, with a mandate to protect civilians. Sudan has thus far refused.

Although the A.U. seems likely to expand its presence, almost all the displaced Africans I spoke with in Darfur said they would trust only Western forces to bring peace. African troops were too susceptible to bribes, they said, and African governments would end up siding with Khartoum, as they had in the past. "We will not return to our homes until the white people come and make us safe," Abdum Shogar Adem, a thirty-two-year-old father of three, told me at the Kalma camp in July, soon after his village had been attacked by government helicopter gunships. The Western powers, however, are not likely to answer Adem's call. The United States military is overstretched, given the occupation of Iraq, and it is unwilling to contribute troops for a peacekeeping mission. It has not even offered to equip or transport A.U. troops, which lack the logistical sophistication to deploy on their own.

The Bush Administration has been admirably willing to send relief to Sudan and to condemn the *janjaweed*. But, having alienated many of its U.N. allies with its unilateralism and perceived moralism, it has been unable to rally other nations to the cause. Countries like Russia and France have exploited the U.S.'s loss of standing internationally to justify their own inaction on Sudan. Meanwhile, the Administration, which views the International Criminal Court with contempt, has not urged the U.N. Security Council to refer the atrocities in Darfur to the court, although no other international institution is equipped to prosecute such crimes. In the end, the U.S. has applied just enough pressure to get humanitarian relief to many Darfurians, but not enough to persuade the perpetrators of violence to lay down their arms. Meanwhile, the seasonal rains have begun to fall, reducing the reach of international aid workers and substantially increasing the risk of cholera, dysentery, and mass death.

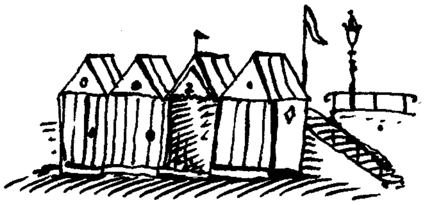
It is hard to view Amina Abaker Mohammed, the refugee in Chad whose son was beheaded, as fortunate. Her husband, too, never returned home, and is presumed murdered. But in certain respects her current state is preferable to that of displaced people who are still in Darfur. Although she has to worry about feeding her five children, she can feel relatively secure when she goes scouring for firewood. In Sudan, by contrast, displaced people in camps remain as fearful of *janjaweed* attacks as they were when they inhabited their villages.

Because the food that comes from aid groups must be cooked before it becomes edible, in the camps wood is a commodity as precious as millet and flour. Foraging for wood is women's work in Sudan; but, given the high incidence of rape outside the camps, families have begun sending out women who are old or considered unattractive. This does not seem to have deterred the *janjaweed*, however.

In Kas, the displaced people living in makeshift tents near the schools must venture outside town to find wood. When the refugees first arrived, they had to walk a few hundred yards into the neighboring savanna to find fuel; now, with the nearby wood used up, they must walk for as long as an hour—and that will only increase with time. Two days before I arrived, in late July, Aisha Abdullah Youssef, twenty-two, and Asha Muhammed Abd el-Karim, twenty-seven, were captured by *janjaweed* soldiers while gathering wood, and were gang-raped. When I spoke with the women, they kept their eyes fixed on the ground. Their attackers had stripped them of their clothes, and they had returned naked to the crowded camp; word spread quickly that they had been violated. As I listened to their stories, a queue formed of people who wished to share their tales of recent assault. Others pointed to reddened gashes in their feet and backs; the marks, they said, were from worms that had pierced their flesh at night as they slept on the hard earth.

I noticed a woman who was sitting nearby with a child on each side of her. She was trying to stir millet over a fire, but she had no wood and was having little luck using grass to make a flame. Both children looked extremely weak; their legs were bone thin, and pus caked around the eyes of one child. The woman, Rashida Abbas, came from Kailek, a town a few hours away; in March, Rashida said, more than a hundred men had been summarily executed there, including her husband. She had six children before the conflict, but only four had survived.

When the *janjaweed* came, Abbas told me, her oldest child, a boy, had run ahead of her. She had carried her infant on her back, and she had taken one of her girls in each hand. This hadn't left her with a free hand for either of her younger sons, five-year-old Adam Muhammed and seven-year-old Hassan Muhammed. They trailed behind as the Arab soldiers threw matches onto the roofs of the huts. An Arab militiaman suddenly grabbed the boys, and Abbas pleaded that they be released. The gunman warned her that if she didn't shut up, all of her children would be killed. She backed away as instructed, but as she did so the man threw five-year-old Adam into the fire. "Mama, Mama!" he shouted, as the flames consumed him. Hassan, his older brother, briefly escaped his captor's grasp, but as he ran toward his mother he was shot in the back twice and died instantly.

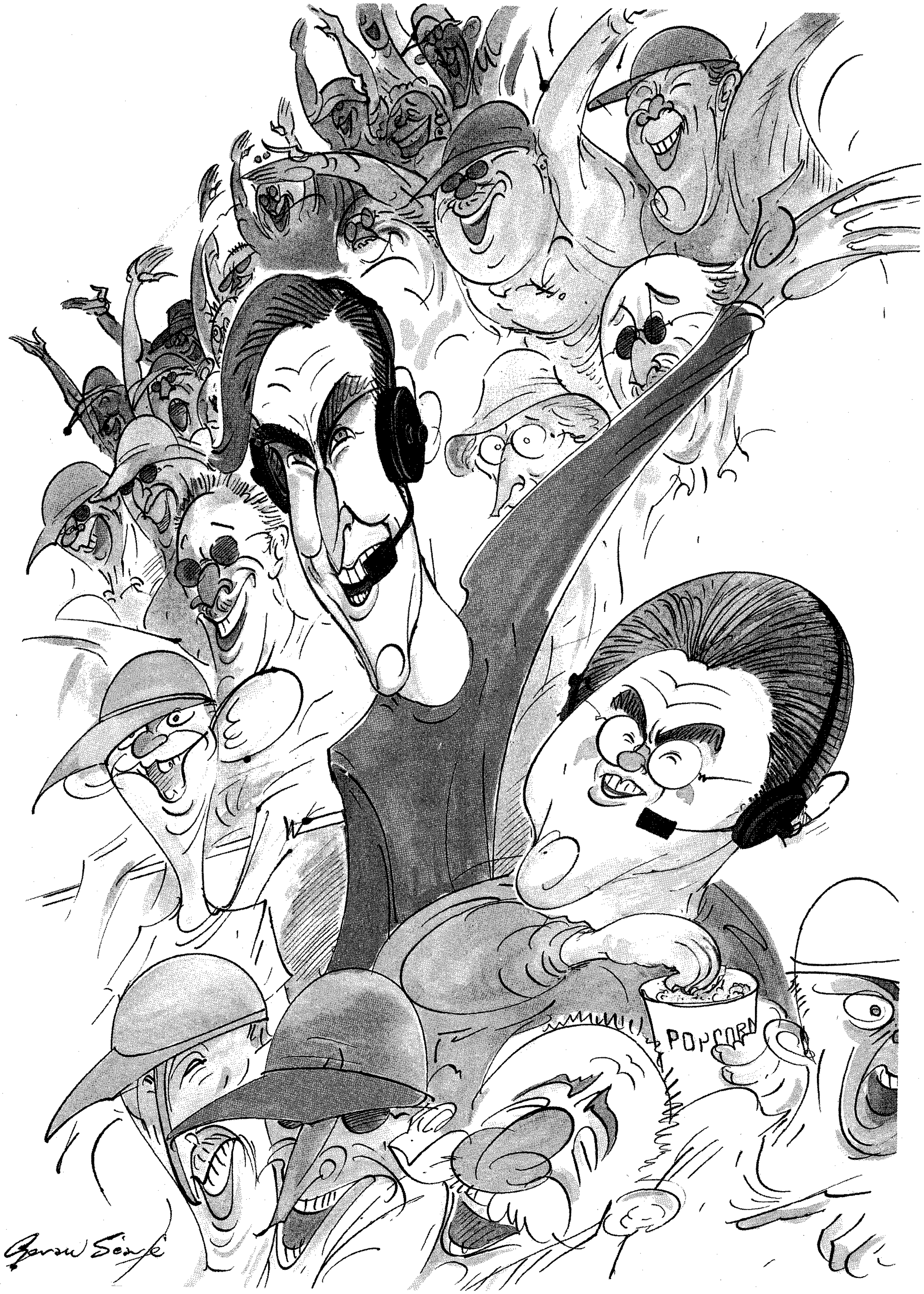


It is no wonder that Darfurians say that they will not return to their homes unless international peacekeepers are deployed to protect them. They will never trust Khartoum again.

As I talked with Musal Hilal in the El Fasher airport waiting room, he discussed the possibility that he and other *janjaweed* leaders could have their assets frozen and their ability to travel curtailed. "I have no assets in international banks, so that is not a problem," he said as he watched Sudanese soldiers ready our plane for its flight back to Khartoum. "But the travel ban—that would be a humiliation. I am a tribal leader. My reputation comes above anything and everything."

Hilal is aware that if the international pressure on Khartoum intensifies the government might sell him out. This explains why he courts Western journalists, staging elaborate shows of African-Arab unity. But he also knows how risky it would be for the government to challenge him—even if it wanted to appease its international critics. Khartoum's leaders rely on tribal militias as their main weapon of war. And, in Hilal's case, the Sudanese government helped create him, and he knows too much.

"The government call to arms is carried out through the tribal leaders," Hilal said. "Every government comes and finds us here. When they leave, we will still be here. When they come back, we will still be here. We will always be here." ♦



Gerald Scarfe

PROFILES

THE BOYS

What Mike and the Mad Dog talk about when they talk about sports.

BY NICK PAUMGARTEN

When talking about sports, you are supposed to have an opinion, which another person can then agree with or disagree with, so that a conversation may proceed and silence may be averted. The opinion need not be subtle or original, as long as it is arguable. Some people shun pregame predictions, or best-ever lists, or disparagement of referees, but very few of those who pay attention to spectator sports can go long without coming to the conclusion that one player is better than another or that someone ought to be traded, benched, or fired, if not pelted with batteries and coins. You present a hypothesis—Franco's gotta go—and a discussion ensues. It is a useful talent, to be able to sustain a dialogue in this manner, and there are perhaps no two men who are more adept at it than Mike Francesa and Christopher Russo, the hosts of the "Mike and the Mad Dog" show, which airs weekday afternoons on WFAN, a sports radio station in New York. Mike and the Mad Dog have been talking to each other on the air about sports for fifteen years, five days a week, five and a half hours a day, which, if you account for advertisements, adds up to roughly fifteen thousand hours—enough time to read aloud all twenty-nine volumes of the Encyclopædia Britannica more than twice.

It is safe to say, although many would argue the point, that in New York City sports provide the most common ground for routine conversation among friends and strangers—among men, anyway. Mike and the Mad Dog are the hub and the font of it. In the show's time slot (one to six-thirty), only one radio station—the classic-rock Q104.3—attracts more male listeners between the ages of twenty-five and fifty-four. Francesa and Russo are as much a part of the city's soundscape as jackhammers and accelerating buses, and, depending on your cast of mind, they can be as mesmerizing or as odious as the Teletubbies. Though their faces may be made for radio, their voices, by most measures, are not. Francesa, who is from East Atlantic Beach, on Long Island, speaks with a thick Long Island accent, in a deep-timbred head-cold tone that makes words like "Giambi" and "Isiah" sound as though they'd been dunked in onion dip. His is the voice of authority, of donnish pronouncement. Russo, the Mad Dog, is also from Long Island—Syosset—but his voice is otherworldly: loud, shrill, high-pitched, a little hoarse, suggestive of after-school tutoring sessions and Benzedrine. He talks fast and has a savant's memory for pitching sequences, third-down conversions, and obscure statistics from seasons long past. Russo is the ranter. When he gets worked up or speed-reads commercials, the syllables clot like kids swarming the ball on a soccer field, until out of a scrum of misshapen syllables a predicate emerges, or a slogan like "the luxury of Lexus." He has a cartoonish cackle and a knack for malaprop: "analysis of paralysis," "agrarius error," "cohorsed." Many declarations begin with a rapid-fire "bottomlineis," "let'sfaceit," or "nodoubtaboutit." There is never a doubt, anyway, which one of the two men is speaking.

For two years, their show has been simulcast on cable, on the YES Network. Television is not kind to radio; it diffuses its charms and accentuates its limitations. But watching "Mike and the Mad Dog" can be enlightening, because it dispels once and for all the suspicion that they are broadcasting from a Massapequa bar or from adjoining cells. Generally, they are shown on a split screen: two men in golf shirts, two microphones, some stat sheets. Francesa, who is fifty, is a large man, with cropped gray-flecked hair and, when his face is at rest, the fishy frown of an expert on guard against the advance of paltry arguments. His smile suggests handsomer days. Russo, forty-four, is thin, long-faced, ferret-eyed, with boyish brown hair. He moves around a lot in his seat. On the radio, you can occasionally hear the evidence of this in the variations in the volume of his voice as he knocks up against his microphone, and then jerks away, though when a caller is making a long, complicated claim, he sits still, with his lips pursed, like a woman checking her lipstick in the mirror. The men sometimes consult the tabloids or fidget with pens. During a broadcast, Francesa drinks several bottles of Diet Coke.

"We don't do guy talk," Francesa likes to say. "We do sports talk." By this he means that they do not engage in lewd conversation, scatological humor, crude provocation, or any of the brasher methods practiced by many sports talkers who might claim Mike and the Mad Dog as forebears. They do, however, do small talk, in part to establish when and how they found the opportunity to watch all the sports that the job requires:

Russo: First off, good afternoon, Mike. How you doing?

Francesa: What up, Dog? How was your Father's Day?

R: I will go there. I had a very, very good Father's Day. My wife allowed me to go hit golf balls.

F: Yeah, I played yesterday, too. It was nice.

R: Did you play? I just hit balls.

F: Yeah, I played.

R: Good for you!

F: Beautiful weather, beautiful weather.

R: Wow, where'd you play? Garden City Men's?

F: Yes, I did.

R: Nice job! Look at the big guy!

F: It was one of the nicest days you could ever have. Little breeze, seventy-five degrees.

R: What time you get out, seven-thirty?

F: Eleven, and finished at, uh, two-thirty.

R: That's the way to do it.

GERALD SCARFE

Chris Russo and Mike Francesa's collaboration has been likened to a marriage, with skirmishes that threatened to tear it asunder.

F: Went home and watched the U.S. Open.

R: Not a bad day. Good boy, good job, Mike. Saturday, I was with family responsibilities. I left my house basically with three kids at 9 A.M. and got back at eight o'clock at night. I did not see one second of the golf on Saturday.

F: Well, I watched a lot of it.

R: Sunday, I was on top of it, but not Saturday.

F: I watched a lot on Saturday. I watched Sunday, I went out to eat, and had a TV in front of me in the restaurant with no sound on holes thirteen through eighteen, but I had TiVo-ed it, so I went back and watched it again, with the crowd noise and everything else. And I watched the highlights last night. . . . We have not talked about this, so I'd like to hear your reaction. I have three or four things myself, but go ahead, you can have the first shot.

Mike and the Mad Dog are not friends, really. They hardly spend any time together outside the studio, beyond appearing at charity events and walking to the parking lot after the show, but on the air they sound as though they were close enough to share gum. During exciting games, Francesa and Russo often talk on the phone; Francesa told me, with some exaggeration, that, on the night of this year's triple-overtime playoff thriller between the New Jersey Nets and the Detroit Pistons, "Dog called me forty-two times."

Francesa and Russo have grown so accustomed to talking to each other about sports that even when they are talking about something else they sound as if they're discussing a faked punt or a quirk in the Yankees' schedule. A few years ago, circumstances (Knicks-Pacers, conference finals in Indianapolis, Francesa's hotel room not ready) placed the two of them for an hour or so in a hotel room together—a rare occurrence. (When they are on the road, they often stay in separate hotels. "I always stay in the best hotel," Francesa told me.) Chris Carlin, their producer at the time, who now has a show of his own on WFAN, walked in to find them watching "The Horse Whisperer." Carlin started to speak, but they shushed him; on the TV screen Robert Redford was breaking up with Kristin Scott Thomas. When the scene was over, Russo said, solemnly, "Mikey, he had to do it, he had to do it."

"It was the right move, Dog," Francesa replied. "The right move."

On the air, Francesa and Russo also conduct interviews with athletes, coaches, executives, broadcasters, and writers. And, of course, they talk to callers—according to the station, between two and five per cent of the audience calls in. Mike and the Mad Dog are not as reliant on callers as other sports-talk-show hosts are, in part because they have each other, and in part because they believe that the callers do not know as much as they do. But they do have regulars with some renown of their own, whom Francesa characterizes as "professional callers"—Bruce from Bayside, Al from White Plains, Richard from Manhattan (who lives in Brooklyn and calls exclusively about the Dodgers and Syracuse University). "Some we use as contributors," Francesa says. "Some we use as foils." Russo mans the call button. Often, he will disconnect the caller after a few moments, and he and Francesa will continue discussing the matter at hand, so that it sounds as though the vigor and precision of their rejoinders had rendered the caller speechless. On other occasions, the conversation evolves, and the caller is forgotten:

Russo: Dustin on the car phone. Dustin?

Dustin: Listen, about half an hour ago, Chris, you said that Derek Jeter is not a great player, that he's a very good player.

R: In my opinion.

D: What is great, Chris? What is it? . . . Derek Jeter is the best player on the best team. Therefore, he is a great player.

R: He's not even the best player on his own team! A-Rod's better than he is!

Francesa: You gotta draw the line. See, here's where you get yourself in trouble. Jeter's a great Yankee. Is he a great player? The problem is if you use A-Rod as the mark of greatness, then the other guys are all gonna be short of him.

R: Well, I don't even wanna do that, 'cause that's not fair, 'cause A-Rod's an immortal.

F: Right. To me, there's immortal players, who are great players. Then, there could be a great player who's not an immortal player, and then you cut it down from there. . . . You know, I would be a guy who'd probably have right now in baseball maybe five great players.

R: And we're gonna be hard markers here?

F: Great players.

R: We're gonna be hard markers here.

F: I mean, Bonds is a great player, A-Rod's a great player, Guerrero's a great player.

R: Sosa?

F: Ahh, yeah, he's a great player.

R: Pujols?

F: Yeah, he's, he's, he's now a great player. Yeah. Lousy fielder, but he is great.

R: Todd Helton?

F: No.

R: Tejada?

F: No.

(*Long pause.*)

R: Umm, I agree with both.

F: I'd probably stop there.

R: Yeah. Garciaparra? Manny Ramirez?

F: I can't even put Griffey there anymore.

R: Manny Ramirez?

F: He's flawed, so I won't put him there.

R: That's fair, fair, fair, fair. Let's write 'em down. This is a good argument.

F: Great players.

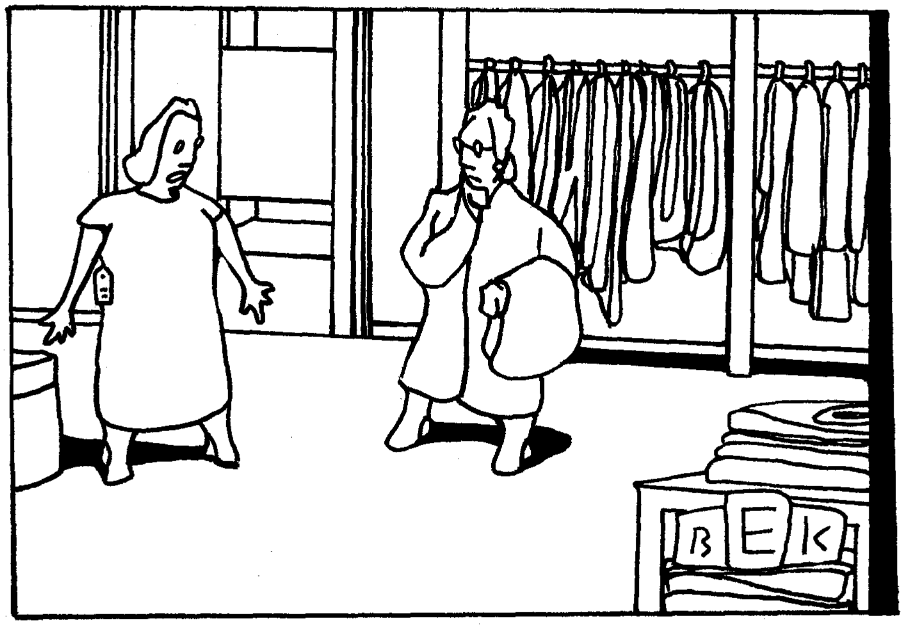
R: A-Rod.

F: The best three players in baseball—in my mind—are Bonds, A-Rod, and Guerrero. To me they're the three best players in baseball.

R: The definition is strong here.

F: Great player.

WFAN is broadcast out of a basement suite at the Kaufman Astoria studios, in Astoria, Queens. Mike and the Mad Dog use the same studio as the "Imus in the Morning" show, though



"Does it say I'm a Wittgenstein scholar?"

"I have to be getting back—I'm the glue that holds my parents' marriage together."

Don Imus, who is something of a germophobe, has his own microphone, which he does not permit Francesa and Russo or other sports-talk hosts to use. Imus, the station's star and its biggest revenue generator, occasionally has Francesa or Russo on the air to talk about sports or to address various intra-station feuds. He calls them "Fatso and Fruit Loops." Others at WFAN call them the Boys.

The airwaves are now full of sports talk; practically every city has at least one all-sports radio station—the Zone, the Deuce, the Ticket, the Jock—as well as billboards along commuter routes advertising the local wacky duo. Credit or blame for this development inevitably goes to WFAN and Mike and the Mad Dog. When Emmis Broadcasting launched WFAN, in 1987, on 1050 AM, there was no such thing as an all-sports radio station. Of course, sports and radio go way back together, as far as Guglielmo Marconi's unlicensed transmission, in 1899, of the America's Cup, from New York Harbor, and sports chatter, as an outgrowth of prizefight and baseball broadcasts, is almost as old as the crack of the bat. The sports-talk call-in show, as we know it, originated in New York forty years ago, with Bill Mazer, who is known as the Amazing, for his ability to answer obscure sports-trivia questions, and it blossomed, in various how-'bout-them-Yanks incarnations, under the care of such leisurely baritones as Art Rust, Jr., and John Sterling.

Still, it remained a primitive, intermittent form. There were many sensible people who were extremely skeptical of WFAN's prospects before the station launched, and they became even more so once it did. Emmis had assembled a roster of recognizable names—TV men such as Jim Lampley and Greg Gumbel. They made for a bankable business plan but lousy radio. The talk was wan, and the ratings were weak. Then, three things happened. First, WFAN moved down the AM dial, to 660, acquiring a stronger signal, one capable of reaching deep into Connecticut and New Jersey. Second, WFAN got Imus, a longtime veteran of WNBC, 660's previous tenant; Imus didn't focus on sports, but he was an expert radio man, and he brought verve and stability, of a kind, to the morning hours, which had proved unaccommodating to pure sports talk. Third, WFAN decided to replace its afternoon host, Pete Franklin, a curmudgeon from Cleveland who had failed to charm New York with his habit of referring to callers as scumbags and schmucks. At a company meeting, Mark Mason, who was WFAN's program director at the time, floated the idea of replacing Franklin with Francesa and Russo, two relative nobodies. "Here we had a skinny Italian kid from Long Island, in Chris, and a less than skinny Italian kid from Long Island, in Mike," Mason recalled recently. "Mike would be viewed as the more knowledgeable one, and Chris would be the über-fan, the foil, the Everyman, the wacko. The owners of the company looked at me like I was from Mars."

At the time, Francesa had a Sunday-morning show on WFAN, but he had been toiling at the furnace of sports analysis and statistics for a while. He had spent six years at *College & Pro Football Newsweekly* and seven years as a researcher at CBS Sports, where he acquired a reputation as "Brent Musburger's brain." The extent to which such a reputation is desirable depends on one's opinion of Brent Musburger, but Francesa knew his stuff. When WFAN hired him, Francesa recalled, "I said, 'I wanna be on the air.' They said, 'You kidding? We're bringing in the biggest names in the country. No chance.' "

Russo, meanwhile, had been paying his radio dues. He had his own show on weekends on WMCA, a New York City station in decline. Eventually, he attracted the attention of Bob Raissman, the sports-TV-and-radio columnist for the *News*. "I heard him go into one of his tirades for the first time," Raissman told me. "I was thinking of Mad Dog Vachon, an old pro wrestler. I remember seeing a picture of this guy Vachon chewing on a newspaper or a magazine. That was the impression I got when I heard Chris." Raissman wrote about Russo, and the Mad Dog moniker stuck. Soon Russo was doing bits on Imus.

There was a rationale behind Mason's decision to pair them up—pungent, local voices with uncommon ardor and instinctive expertise—but at the time it was little more than a lark. "I think they were put together for the alliteration," Bob Gelb, their first producer, who is now an ad salesman at WFAN, told me. They débuted on September 5, 1989. Things did not go well at first: neither of them was happy about the arrangement; each felt that he deserved his own show. Sports talk had long been a solo gig. Early on, they bickered on the air, and, according to Mason, there were backstage debates about such matters as whose name would come first (" 'Mike and the Mad Dog' sounded prettier to me grammatically," Mason said) and which of them would get what was known as the power seat—Imus's seat, the one facing the control room ("Mike sat there," Mason said). Each had an entourage of advisers and friends who pushed him to ask for more.

"They hated each other," Gelb recalled. "I was on the phone with each of them on a nightly basis. I would continually lie to each of them about what they were saying about each other. They were kicking the bejesus out of each other. Mike wanted respect, and he felt that this knucklehead sitting next to him was going to take his credibility and throw it out the window. From Dog's side, Mike was just being pompous and trying to impress people."

Their collaboration has often been likened to a marriage, and over the years there have been skirmishes that threatened to tear it asunder. "World War One," as Gelb calls it, occurred in 1992, while Francesa was on vacation at the Breakers, in Palm Beach. In his absence, Russo had Francesa's name removed from the jingle that introduces the show. On another occasion, Francesa returned from a vacation a day early, hoping to rejoin Russo on the air; Russo, savoring the solo airtime, accused Francesa of trying to horn in on his time. There was a great deal of shouting, and during a closed-door cool-down meeting with WFAN executives they nearly started throwing punches. Contract negotiations have been occasions for strain, according to an executive at the company; their contracts expire at different times, but neither would accept a cent less than the other. (They don't talk about their salaries, not even with each other, but the executive said that each makes well over a million dollars a year. WFAN sells as much as eighteen minutes of ad time an hour during "Mike and the Mad Dog.")

It is a testament to the passion and sincerity of Mike and the Mad Dog, and an occasional boon to their listeners, that disagreements over questions of sport have blossomed into real rancor, too. Before the 1991 Super Bowl, Russo predicted that the Buffalo Bills would beat the New York Giants, 49–13. Francesa had picked the Giants. Francesa's objections were both personal and philosophical: Bill Parcells, the Giants' coach at the time, was a close friend of his, so Russo's call seemed to be grounded in animus rather than in analysis. (The Giants won, 20-19.) There have been long-running quarrels over personnel: Jeter versus A-Rod, Don Mattingly versus Will Clark, Parcells versus George Young. Denominationally, Francesa is a Yankees man, reared on Mickey Mantle. Russo is a devotee of the San Francisco Giants.

Still, sports argument is an exercise in finding equilibrium, and, inevitably, Francesa and Russo have found fellowship with each other on the air. These days, they usually agree. They have entered the pantheon of long-running radio duos—Amos 'n' Andy, Burns and Allen, Klavan and Finch. That they have remained more or less a local phenomenon arises from the fact that they focus, with meticulous attention, on the fortunes of the local teams. Their show, unlike Imus's or Howard Stern's, doesn't travel well. They are the sound that New York makes when it is talking to itself.

MERCHANTS

In a town where a miracle occurred, merchants install their booths,
side by side, along a street through which pilgrims proceed.

They display their goods, wondering at the stupidity which compels
people to buy little crosses, tiny medals, rosaries.

Even plastic bottles in the shape of the Madonna for preservation of
the healing water.

The sick on their stretchers, the paralyzed in their wheelchairs

fortify the merchants in their disdainful belief that religion is self-
consolation, based on the understandable need for any kind of rescue.

They rub their hands, reckon, add to their inventory new supplies
of crucifixes, or nickel coins imprinted with the effigies of Popes.

And the pilgrims, looking at their faces, onto which have crept
scarcely noticeable smiles, feel threatened in their faith, just as
children feel threatened by grownups, keepers of a secret, guessed at,
but still vague.

—*Czeslaw Milosz*

(Translated, from the Polish, by the author and Robert Hass.)

Among listeners, Russo, as the passionate eccentric, may stir more affection, and Francesa, as the ostensible insider, garners the respect, but it is widely acknowledged—even, to a point, by the principals themselves—that they are better together than alone. (Russo has a show on Saturday mornings; Francesa does Sunday mornings during football season, and he has a Sunday-evening TV show on NBC in New York, called "Mike'd Up.")

"We're clever performers," Francesa told me one evening. "I know how to ride Dog. I know when to let him go, when to rein him in. I know when to play the straight man. I know when to get out of the way. Dog is not an act. He's real. He's unique. But he is a shrewder performer than people understand. He feeds off my intellect. I feed off his energy. I'm biting, I'm incisive, I'm quick. Dog is passionate and brings a unique persona. I don't want to seem immodest, but I've never heard a sports show that's even close."

Francesa's greatest weakness may be his self-regard, which he cops to, under the stipulation that it is justified. "I'm one of those people who would've made money no matter what they did," he told me one afternoon. He imagines that if he hadn't been a radio celebrity he would have been a lawyer or a coach. The foundation of his success, he says, is his work ethic, which he owes, in part, to the fact that when he was eight years old his father, a car dealer, abandoned the family and was never heard from again. "It made me more independent, taught me to go out and make money," Francesa said. As a teen-ager, he worked during the summers as a soda jerk and parking-lot attendant at the Atlantic Beach Club, on the South Shore. He hitchhiked everywhere. In high school, he was an athlete cut low by multiple injuries to his knees. He knew, even then, that he was destined to be involved in sports, and at St. John's University he majored in communications and athletic administration. ("I used to get good marks in writing," he said.)

Travelling around the country with Brent Musburger for CBS, Francesa got to know a generation of assistants who would later become head coaches and general managers. "Jimmy Johnson, Rick Pitino, John Calipari," Francesa said. "They've grown up, and I've grown up. They become friends, they become contacts. That's how it works." He went on, "That's always been the great criticism of me with people, according to some critics, is that I have these relationships that are unholy alliances. Such as Parcells. I don't know how that's an unholy alliance. It's a friendship."

Still, he said, "You get to a point where you break stories because of your relationships." For example, he was the first to report the Knicks' hiring, last winter, of Isiah Thomas as general manager. "I broke the Isiah story," Francesa told me. "I was Christmas shopping with my wife at Rockefeller Center. I got the call, and I called it in to the station. I've got sources. A lot of guys resent that—the beat writers."

Francesa is not warm; he can seem simultaneously blunt and remote. Fourteen years ago, his brother committed suicide, and a few years later his first marriage fell apart. (He remarried four years ago.) He discussed these events on the air at the time but does not much like to talk about them now.

"Mike's one of those guys who internalize stuff," Gelb said. "I hope he goes home and screams sometimes."

FRANCESA: The Mets screw everything up, we know that. I mean, the Mets could screw up a one-car funeral. I mean, we know that, O.K.? But we're supposed to get to this now: for two years the Mets were beaten up because they wouldn't move Mike Piazza to first, and now they're beaten up because they won't move Mike back to catcher?

RUSSO: That's not fair. He's played the games. He can't hit. He's had a terrible offensive season.

F: You know, Mike's slowing down. He's never been a great athlete, but he was a great hitter, and Mike is slowing down. I mean, it's obvious, he is slowing down.

R: Ah, one other thing on that subject: forget Matsui. We know he's—

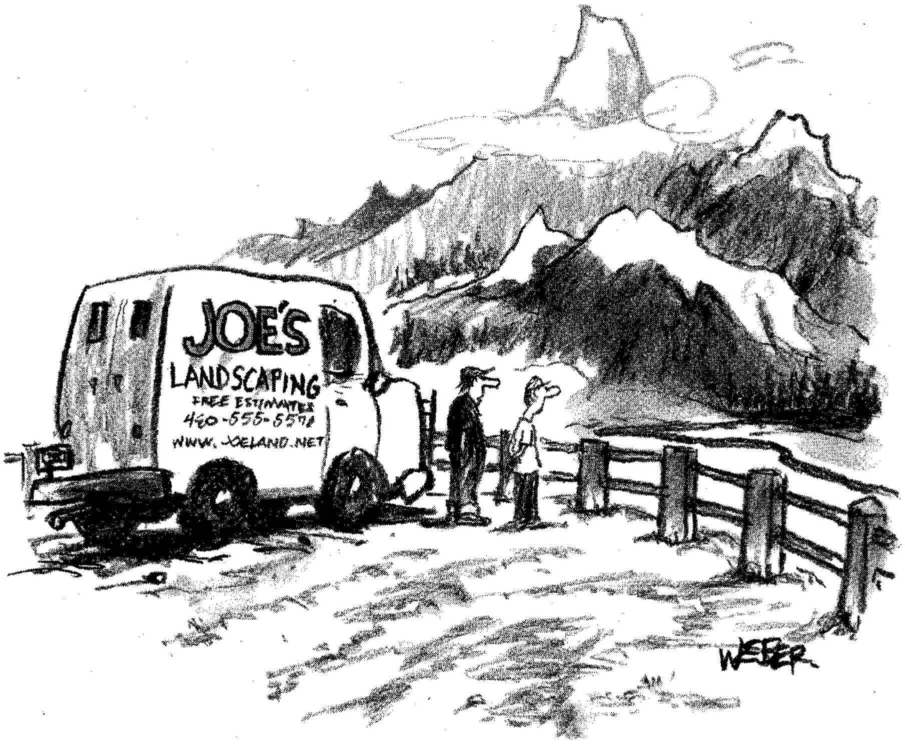
F: No, wait, let's stay there for a second, before we go on.

R: All right, go ahead.

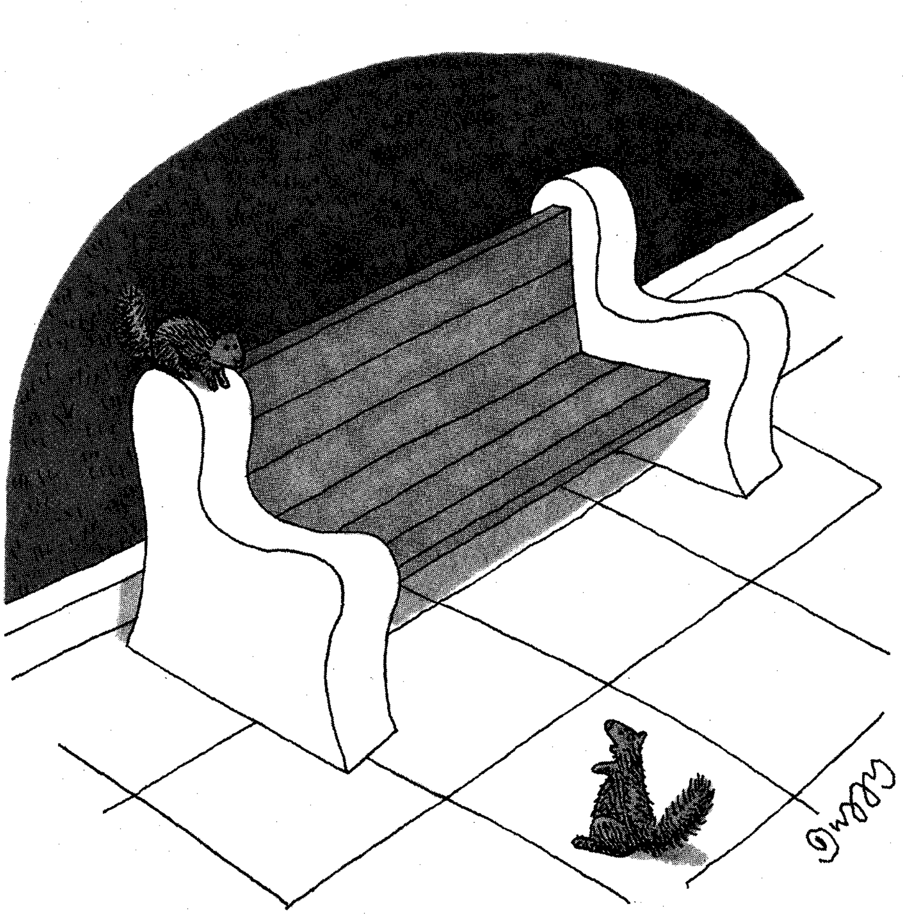
F: How do you compound this by now putting Reyes at shortstop every other day? It's ridiculous! You know, enough!

Last year, Chris Russo, with the writer Allen St. John, published a book, "The Mad Dog 100: The Greatest Sports Arguments of All Time." It features conventional debate (Mays or Mantle), best-ever lists ("greatest vapor locks"), and occasional iconoclasm ("Is Notre Dame football awe-inspiring—or just annoying?"). In a section entitled "Watching the Game, Doggie Style," Russo sets down his regimen for proper home-spectating: Lie on the carpet in front of the TV, alone, without family or friends. No channel surfing. His game-time beverage is Gatorade. "I'm not big into snacks. No beer. Just a little something to sip on and I'm good," he writes. "I like to move around during a game. If there's a huge game where the Giants can be eliminated, I'll pace between pitches, I'll stop during the pitch—put my hand up in front of my face like a catcher's mask. Ball two. Then I'll pace some more. Have a couple of fingers, to keep my eyes open. At 2–0, I like to play it out."

One evening last spring, when the Giants were playing the Mets at Shea Stadium, I met Russo at the radio station and rode home with him to watch the game on TV. Russo lives in New Canaan, Connecticut, about an hour from Queens. He makes the trip each day in his BMW. The game hadn't started yet, so he drove with the radio off, as he usually does. "I'm not a radio listener," he said. "I wanna go on the air fresh." (He does like music, especially



"I would have done this differently."



"Try to remain calm. I'm going to talk you down."

that of Bruce Springsteen and Yanni, which he considers "mood-altering.")

"This would have been the last profession in America my parents would've chosen for me," he said. "My father wanted me to be a jeweller, like him. He was not a big sports fan. My mother, though, realized this is what I had to do. You can't do this right unless you have a little kid's appetite for sports. You can't pick it up late in life. It's almost a life in training. Think of it: half of sports is history. DiMaggio, Mantle, Bonds, the '51 Series, Wilt-Russell." His mother, Vera, is English, and particular about language. "She likes grammar and the piano," Russo said. She came to the United States fifty years ago, as a translator for the Spanish government, in what Russo called "some weather-related capacity." His father, Tony, who is from Flushing, worked in the diamond district, dealing in opals and cultured pearls. The Russos met in New York and settled in Syosset, on the North Shore. Mad Dog is their only child.

A man who roots for something other than the home-town team must often account for himself; Russo's explanation for his devotion to the San Francisco Giants involves a trip that he and his parents took to Philadelphia for a jewelry convention in the summer of 1968, when he was eight. The Russo family happened to stay in the same hotel as the Giants, who were in town to play the Phillies. "I got all the Giants' autographs except Willie Mays," Russo told me. "That was the year Bobby Bonds broke in. I became a huge Bobby Bonds fan. It was a little late for Mays. So Bonds was my guy. I *loved* Bobby Bonds."

Russo went to Darrow, a small boarding school in upstate New York, and Rollins College, in Florida. (He also studied abroad, in England and Australia, and in 1978 took a weeklong van trip through Tasmania—"It's something like the third-southernmost island in the world, so I enjoyed that.") He has even been called preppy, and it is true that he wears polo shirts and loves tennis. Still, his rise through the radio ranks was unglamorous. After coming home from college, he drove back down to Florida in a blue Gremlin and landed an ad-sales job at a small station in Jacksonville. On his first day, the station's sports guy quit, and Russo took his place, doing updates in the morning and a call-in show in the early evening. Eventually, he moved on to a station in Orlando. When it became clear that the people of central Florida were having trouble understanding his accent, the station sent him to see a speech therapist twice a week. "What I learned was the concept of time," Russo said. "Time makes me talk fast."

A few weeks before my visit, Russo, his wife, Jeanne, and their three young children had moved into a new six-thousand-square-foot house on a one-acre lot, in a recently developed cul-de-sac. We pulled up to a three-car garage; the blacktop was strewn with toys. In the window over the garage, his wife and kids were waving to him. "Hi, buddy!" Russo called out to the oldest. "How's my little pal?" He rushed inside, and there was an outbreak of homecoming mayhem in half-furnished rooms, until Russo declared, "Everyone relax!," at which point the kids settled down to watch cartoons in a room off the kitchen, on a giant flat-screen television that had been Francesa's wedding gift to the Russos.

Jeanne Russo, blond and rosy-cheeked, had on khakis, a red V-neck sweater, and a hair band, and bore an expression of weary relief. Russo calls her Snappy, short for Gingersnap. As she reheated buffalo wings in the microwave, her husband wandered off, and she took the opportunity to enumerate his virtues—loyalty, thoughtfulness, the "Rain Man" mind—though she allowed that he was not perfect. "Chris is domestically challenged," she said. "He's not a big help around the house. For Christmas, my mother gave him a toolbox with the Yellow Pages in it."

They met on an airplane, in 1993. He was reading "Jurassic Park," and she asked him his opinion of it. Conversation ensued. On their first date, he picked her up at her parents' home, in Rye, and took her to an Italian restaurant on Long Island Sound. "By the end of dinner," she recalled, "the owner and three waiters were sitting at our table talking sports." She asked her brother if he had heard of Russo, and he told her, "A lot of people in New York hate that guy." Russo proposed to her a year later by sending her on an elaborate scavenger hunt in a limousine (one stage was an encounter with Dennis from Yonkers at an Upper East Side sports bar called the Polo Grounds) which ended with her finding Russo in the Oak Room at the Plaza, dressed in a tuxedo.

Russo came back into the kitchen through another door. "Sorry to interrupt," he said. "Piazza hit a home run, broke the record. Two-one Mets, top five." Apparently, Russo had turned on the ballgame upstairs, in the bedroom. After a moment, he slipped off again, under the pretext of putting the children to bed. Jeanne set out platters of wings and garlic bread and penne.

"I don't know how women whose husbands don't have to do it put up with it," she said, referring to all the sports-watching that Russo does.

Russo reappeared—"Seo's out, two-two, sac fly"—and said, "There are days where I do it as an obligation, I can't dispute that. It's my job."

After the children were in bed and Russo had taken me on a quick tour of the house ("Let me show you my TVs"), he reclaimed the big screen in the room next to the kitchen, in time for the tip-off of a late playoff game between the Lakers and the Spurs—rain had delayed the proceedings at Shea. It occurred to him that he had finished his meal. "Snappy," he declared, "that was a great job on dinner. Good effort. Nice job."

He turned his attention, finally, to the exertions on the screen. "Nice play by Kobe . . . nice play by Shaq. . . . Payton is getting killed. . . . That's painful. . . . Oh, my God, Payton stinks!" Russo sat on the edge of his easy chair, blinking at the screen. "I'm a little into this game right now," he said, sounding surprised.

Occasionally, Mike and the Mad Dog go on the road. Every year, for example, they spend a week in the city that is hosting the Super Bowl. At the first one they attended together, in New Orleans in 1990, there was just one sports-talk-radio outfit besides theirs. Last winter, in Houston, there were about a hundred. Each station had a makeshift booth on what was called radio row, which was basically a flotilla of folding tables that had been set up along a vast tract of mezzanine in the convention center downtown. The Super Bowl, being the closest thing that the sports world has to an annual convention, attracts stars and strivers, has-beens and wannabes, who, on their way to and from the TV studios nearby, happily run the gantlet of radio producers desperate to fill time.

Mike and the Mad Dog occupied a prime corner, away from the riffraff, with extra space for TV cameras and lights. "They separated us out," Francesa explained. "You see, we get all the best guests. It used to be that when we were over there, with everyone else, there'd be a total feeding frenzy. There'd be twenty producers waiting there to pounce on our guests when we were done with them."

For Mike and the Mad Dog, the Super Bowl shows are a bit of a grind; they have to focus on a single, overhyped football game, instead of the usual wide array on offer in a city like New York, where there are a dozen professional teams. "You just gotta churn it," Francesa said, after their last show of the week. "You take it in twenty-minute segments. Today at four, it took off. We pounded the rock till four, then flew home."

Later, they met up at a party for Westwood One, the radio-syndication arm of Viacom, which owns WFAN, then headed out for dinner, along with their producer, Marc Malusis, and two of Francesa's friends. They took separate cabs; I rode with Russo. The destination was a steak house called the State Grille, about ten minutes away, but in no time the driver was lost, while pretending not to be. With mounting frustration, Russo began to perceive that the cabbie was essentially driving in circles. "Do you know where it is?" he yelled. "Yes or no?"

Regular listeners know that in recent years Russo, whether because of fatherhood or advancing age or money and fame, has mellowed a bit, and that the throat-rending spittle-spewing tirades of the early years have become increasingly scarce, a rare gift, like the trumpet-playing of the aging Miles Davis. Nonetheless, from time to time, the Dog cuts loose, and here in the cab, in the dismal smoggy gloom of outer Houston, he lost control: "What are you doing? You don't know where you're going? How can you not know where you're going? You're a cabbie! A cabbie! This is ridiculous! I'm wasting my time!" After a minute of this, the driver pulled over on the side of a wide boulevard, in a dark and barren stretch of bad neighborhood, and ordered Russo and the rest of us out of the car. There arose an argument over the wisdom of this. Malusis attempted to keep Russo from talking. Eventually, calm was restored, and the search for the steak house resumed. After a few moments of quiet, the driver asked, "You O.K., my friend?"

Russo, now spent, said, "I can't take it."

Francesa was already at the steak house, nursing a madras, a fruity vodka drink. Malusis explained the delay, and Francesa smiled and said, "When the Dog gets cranky, watch out."

The waiter asked Russo if he would like a beer, and he replied, "I will not have a beer. I will have a madras." Last summer, Russo got into a dispute with some fellow-members of the New Canaan Field Club. He was in a tight tennis match with a friend, but it was time to yield the court to the next group, a woman and her son. He did so grudgingly, telling the woman, "Your son better be Andre Agassi." A foursome on the next court took exception to this comment and upbraided him. He yelled back at them. An argument developed. The club suspended him and his family for ten months; his four-year-old son was kicked out of summer camp. "It ruined my tennis last summer, let's put it that way," Russo told me.

Gradually, at the State Grille, the Dog cheered up. Conversation flowed. "I like Trump," Russo said.

"Have you seen 'The Apprentice'?" Francesa asked.

"I have not seen 'The Apprentice,' " Russo replied.

"It's a good gimmick, Dog," Francesa said. He explained the premise of the show: men and women competing for a job with Donald Trump.

"Those guys are outmatched," a friend said.

"They're getting killed," Francesa said. Back in his Atlantic Beach Club days, Francesa said, he had often parked a limousine belonging to Fred Trump, Donald's father. He recalled the elder Trump as a big tipper. It was a little-known fact, Francesa explained to everyone at the table, that Donald had started out rich.

"Really?" Russo said. "To me, that hurts him, Mike. I might not be giving him credit, but that's a huge advantage, a huge advantage."

"If I'd started out with three hundred and fifty million dollars, I'd own a country by now," Francesa said.

In time, talk turned, as it often will, to the Kennedys. Francesa considers himself a John F. Kennedy buff. "Whaddaya think, Mike?" Russo said. "One shooter, or multiple shooters?"

"I don't have that figured out right now," Francesa said.

A few days after the San Francisco Giants lost in the playoffs last fall to the Florida Marlins:

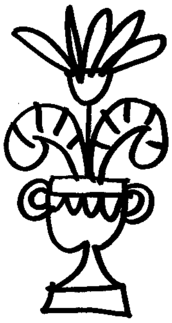
Russo: Just put yourself in my shoes. The Florida Marlins have been in existence for ten years. They have done nothing. They had one great year in '97 and now they're having this magical run again, and both times at the expense of the Giants. Think about that for a second.

Francesa: Yep.

R: I have been around for fifty years. Not a thing. This team out of nowhere knocked us off twice. I'll give you one other stat: the Giants have played four post-season games in Joe Robbie Stadium in the last six years, and they have lost every game in the last at-bat.

F: Yep.

R: Every friggin' game in that stupid ballpark. . . . I'll tell you, Saturday, I was sooo upset, and I thought I was beyond it. I thought it wouldn't bother me. . . . And now I gotta deal with the Yankees winning another World Championship, and I'm out in the first round. I mean, why waste my time? Every single friggin' year I get myself juiced up for this stupid team, and at forty-three years of age and three kids, enough already! Let them go hurt somebody else! I mean, how am I ever, when am I ever gonna have a chance to win a lousy friggin' championship? ONE TIME! NOT TWENTY! ONE LOUSY GODDAM TIME! GEE WHIZ! AH COME ON! WILL YOU PLEASE? . . . THEY NEVER WIN! EVERY YEAR I'LL BE THERE OCTOBER 26TH WITH THE YANKEES PARADING DOWN THE CANYON OF HEROES WITH THEIR TWENTY-SEVENTH CHAMPIONSHIP, AND I'M OUT AGAIN! I DON'T CARE HOW MANY BOOKS I WRITE, HOW MANY KIDS I HAVE, HOW MANY MARCONIS I WIN, I DON'T CARE! I DON'T CARE! WIN ONE! I'LL GIVE IT ALL BACK! I'LL LEAVE NOW! THAT'S ALL I WANT! ONE, UNO! I'LL LEAVE; I SWEAR I'LL LEAVE! I'LL QUIT! I'LL LEAVE! ONE TIME! ONCE! I'LL GET OUT OF HERE FOREVER! YOU'LL NEVER SEE ME AGAIN! LET ME WIN ONCE! ONCE!



Mike and the Mad Dog's greatest moments are, for the most part, lost to history. The station claims that it does not keep tapes of the broadcasts—it will not provide them, anyway—and there appears to be no trade in "Mike and the Mad Dog" bootlegs, perhaps because a fresh batch of material arrives every day. And so hundreds of felicitous turns of phrase live on only in secondhand reports, or in a scrap that enters the vernacular, like a line of Bob Dylan's or Dirty Harry's, immediately applicable to an array of experience. (Mad Dog on the rape charges against Kobe Bryant: "Sure, the human tragedy, but what about the shooting-guard position?")

What tracks they leave turn up in the New York tabloids. Bob Raissman, of the *News*, and Phil Mushnick, of the *Post*, who cover the coverage of sports on television and radio, chronicle noteworthy Mike-and-the-Mad Dog remarks, quarrels, and mistakes. Raissman, who calls them FranDog, is generally more measured and charitable in his assessments of their work. Mushnick, a self-appointed griper about the debasement of sports and the decline of civilization, prefers to find fault. One column, in June, about Mike and the Mad Dog's discussion of Marv Albert's departure as the voice of the Knicks, referred to them as "those two see-through, egocentric, personal agenda and vendetta-driven disinformationists." Mushnick also addressed Francesa directly: "Mikey, you pompous and disingenuous jerk." In Mushnick's view, Francesa and Russo are imperious, condescending, sloppy, and a little corrupt. He sometimes accuses them of giving undue compliments on the air to other sports commentators who happen to have the same agents they do. He also charges them with cowardice: they will rip a coach or an athlete, and then, when that coach or athlete comes on the air to give an interview, they will be very nice to him, knowing that he probably has no idea what they have said about him in the past.

"I listen less and less," Mushnick said. "I find myself listening for forty seconds before I wanna puke." Last February, he tuned in long enough to hear Francesa declare, on the occasion of a Beatles anniversary, that, while John Lennon may have been a better lyricist, Paul McCartney was by far "the better guitar player." McCartney, of course, plays bass. "You don't have to be a Beatles expert or a guitar expert to know that there's little sense in comparing bass players to rhythm and or lead guitarists," Mushnick wrote. "They play different instruments that are mostly played differently and mostly produce different sounds."

Occasionally, Francesa and Russo retaliate. Last year, in the midst of the controversy over whether women should be allowed to join the Augusta National golf club, they mentioned, with some mischief, that Mushnick belongs to an exclusive private golf club. ("That's a lie," Mushnick said, in reference, at least, to the exclusive part. "It's the most open place in the world.") In general, their stated view on Mushnick is that he has a job to do, and they wish he did it better. They also tend to dispute that they said what Mushnick said they said.

"Mushnick should like what we do," Francesa told me. "We're clean—we don't do scatological garbage. Are we brash? Do we have big egos? Yes. But corrupt? Corrupt? How am I corrupt? He is so warped on that."

After the terror attacks of September 11th, according to Mushnick, Francesa and Russo stated on the air that one of the causes of the attacks was American support for Israel, and that American Jews had better declare their allegiance either to the United States or to Israel. Under the headline "MIKE & MAD DOG EXPOSED AS FRAUDS," Mushnick wrote, "I'm sitting there, a third-generation American, my late father a Naval lieutenant who served in two theaters during WW II, four people I know, including a fireman, are missing and presumed dead, and Francesa and Russo are inviting me to take a loyalty test designed for American Jews to prove their virtue to two sports-talk know-it-alls." "That was not said," Francesa told me months later. The station, as usual, claimed that it had no tape of the show.

Francesa watches games in his basement. He has three high-definition flat-screen televisions—two big ones flanking a bigger one—set in a cherry-panelled cabinet that was designed by his second wife, Roe.

"The little ones are thirties," Francesa told me, when I visited him there one Saturday in May. "The big one is sixty. I put them in last football season, after a flood. But I've had a multiple-TV setup for years." The Francesas live in a gated community in Manhasset, Long Island, in a vast, five-bedroom house on a half acre of land. The house is filled with ornate chandeliers and faux-Impressionist garden scenes in heavy gilt frames. They bought it, decorated, four years ago, after they were married. When I asked how many televisions there were, he replied, "I'll give it to you this way. Here are the rooms that don't have TVs: the dining room, the living room, and the library." As for how often he watched sports on them, he said, "I'm gonna be realistic here and say forty hours a week."

On this particular afternoon, the entertainment on the screens was of the bucolic variety. On the left, a golf tournament in Texas; on the right, the preliminaries to the Preakness Stakes; and in the middle, with the sound up, the Yankees. Francesa reclined in an easy chair, his feet in slippers, and a notepad and a tall glass of diet ginger ale at his side. The carpet was wall-to-wall and batter white. At one end of the basement, in shadow, there was exercise equipment, which, one imagines, does not get much use. With a remote control in each hand and the reflections of double plays and birdie putts flickering across the lenses of his eyeglasses, Francesa personified a kind of contentment that is widespread in America on weekend afternoons.

Roe, in turquoise Capri pants and a white T-shirt, came down the stairs with a platter of crackers she had topped with cheese spread and sliced cherry tomatoes. Dark-haired and petite, she is thirty-four and looks a little bit like Katie Couric. She works part time as an office assistant to a plastic surgeon in Huntington. "Who's the second horse today?" she asked, referring to the field at the Preakness.

"Rock Hard Ten," Francesa said, then explained, "Roe's brother always follows my horses." Francesa, on this day, was picking Imperialism to beat Smarty Jones.

Friends were coming over to watch the big race, so, when the time came, Francesa made his way upstairs, limping a little on account of a chronic bad knee, and met them in a sitting room off the kitchen, where there was another large flat-screen TV. The guests were Dr. Stephen O'Brien, an orthopedic surgeon at the Hospital for Special Surgery, who had performed six operations on that knee, and his fiancée. They looked like soap-opera actors. The doctor had a big pinkie ring and wore a pair of orange tasselled loafers. His fiancée mentioned that they were going the next day to watch a polo match.

"Polo?" Francesa said, with distaste.

"I love polo," she said.

"Polo?"

"Come with us," the doctor said.

"It's fabulous," she said. "You'd like polo."

Francesa pronounced the polo term "chukker" in such a way that the subject was soon dropped.

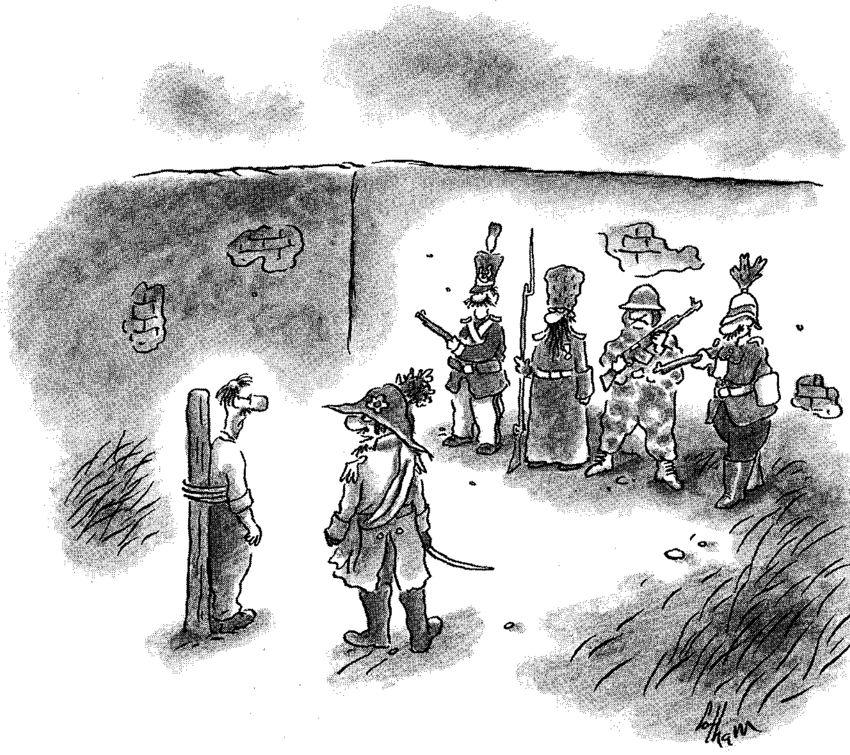
Although Francesa regards the crass commercialization of sports with the appropriate amount of weary disdain, although he does not much like athletes or the way in which they are marketed as stars before they have achieved greatness, he still loves the games, the strategy, the tantalizing absence of a script, the endless cycle of unpredictable outcomes. "There are some parts that are stupid and some that are sleazy," he'd said earlier in the day. "But the games are still the games."

On the TV screen, the horses were making their way to the start. Rock Hard Ten was balky and slick; the stewards were having a hard time getting him into the gate. Francesa said, "See the kidney sweat? You don't like to see that. The horse is too nervous for the race." The stewards pushed at the horse's hindquarters. "He's really acting up now. It impacts the horses in the gate."

"He's a big horse," the fiancée said.

"He's about seventeen hands," Francesa said.

The race was on. The sound of hooves, horses' names, and low-key rooting filled the room. Francesa, sunk deep in his chair, coaxed Imperialism, his pick: "Back off, back off, back off." The horse obliged, fading at the turn. When the race was over and Smarty Jones had won, with Rock Hard Ten placing second and Imperialism a distant fifth, the phone rang, and Francesa picked it up. "It's Dog," Francesa said, smiling. "He wants to know: Is Smarty that good, or is the rest of the field that bad?" ♦

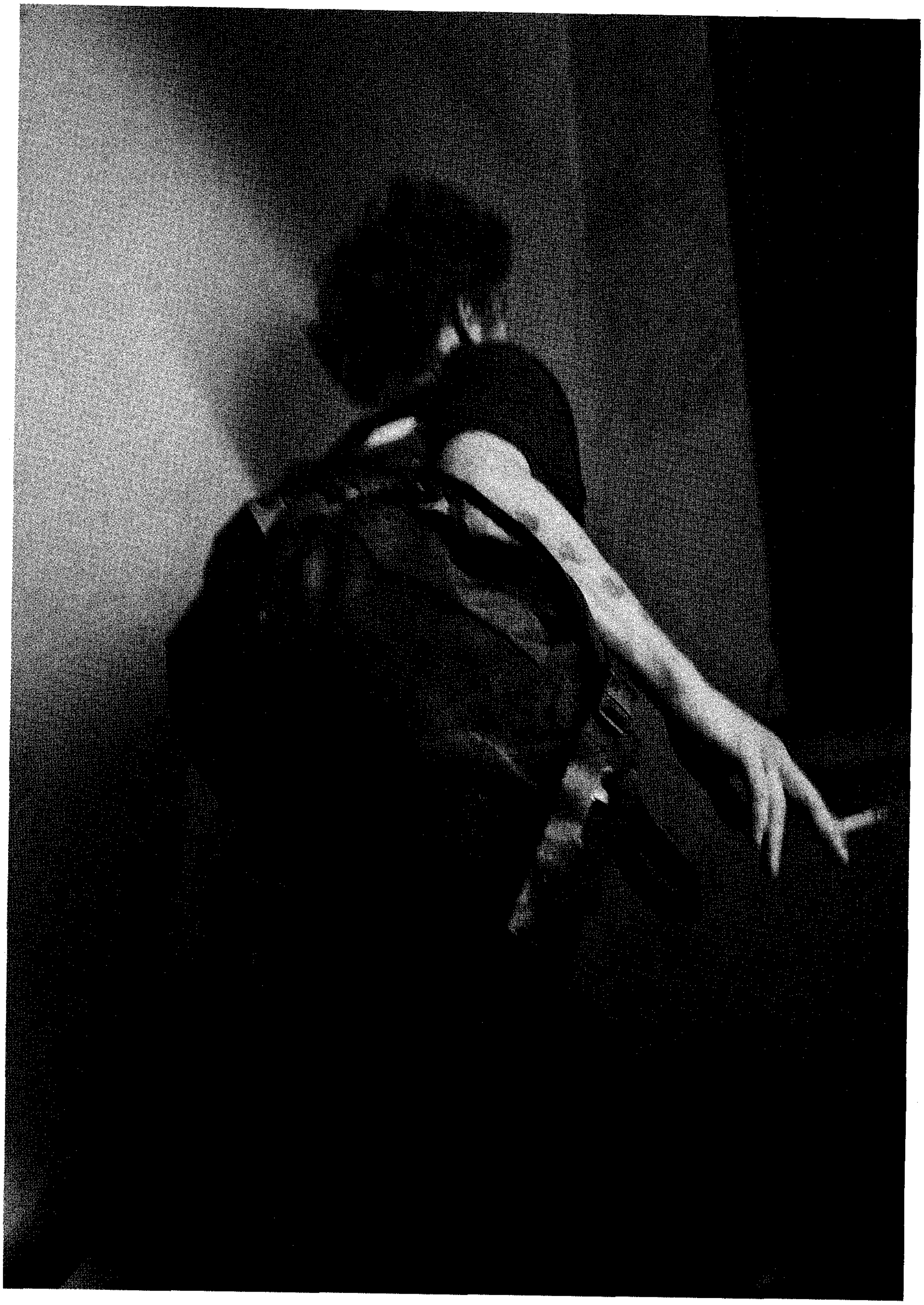


"You will notice that we are represented by troops from many nations."

FICTION

MOTHER'S SON

BY TESSA HADLEY



Someone told Christine that Alan Armstrong was going to get married again: the new girl was apparently half his age. Christine didn't think she cared. She rarely spoke to Alan these days; there was no need for them to consult each other over arrangements for their son, now that Thomas was grown up and made his own arrangements. In fact, after the person told her the news, at a dinner party, Christine forgot it almost at once amid the noisy laughter and conversation, and remembered it again only the following afternoon, when she was sitting at home, writing.

She was making notes for a lecture on women novelists and modernism; books by Rhys and Woolf and Bowen were piled all around her, some of them open face down on the table, some of them bristling with torn bits of paper as bookmarks. When she suddenly remembered the news about Alan, she lifted her mind from its entanglement in the Paris and Ireland of the twenties and stared around in surprise at her real living room in London: tall and white and spacious, with thriving houseplants and, filling the wall at one end, a floor-to-ceiling arched window. The rooms of the flat, where Christine lived alone, were all small—bedroom, bathroom, kitchen—apart from this big one, the centerpiece. Here she worked at a long cherrywood table; when she entertained, she pushed all her books and papers to one end and laid places at the other. It was March. Outside the window a bank of dark slate-gray cloud had been piled up by the wind against a lakelike area of silvery-lemon sky, smooth and translucent; the alterations in the light flowed fast, like changing expressions, across the stone housefronts opposite.

Christine's flat was on the second floor; the house was one in a row of houses, all with the same phenomenal window and cold north light, built as artists' studios in the eighteen-nineties. Some had been renovated and cost the earth, like hers; others were still dilapidated, bohemian, mysterious, the windows draped with rags of patchwork and lace curtains or satin bedspreads. Inside the room, the weather and the light were always intimately present; there were long white curtains at the window, but she didn't close them very often. Instead of shutting the drama out, they suggested too eloquently immense presences on the other side. It had been difficult to choose paintings for the walls; in the end Christine had hung a couple of prints of Mondrian drawings. Nothing else had seemed quite still enough.

Just as she remembered about Alan, her doorbell rang. She padded in her stocking feet to the intercom.

"Mum? It's Thomas."

She made them both coffee and knew that her hands—measuring out the grounds, taking down the mugs—were hasty. Not trembling; that would be too silly for someone as competently independent as she was. But hasty at least in her pleasure at his visit, her eagerness to get back to where her son, her only child, was sprawled waiting for her in the low-slung white armchair in front of the window. She put milk and sugar on the tray; she was glad she had bought a packet of expensive chocolate biscuits. She found an ashtray: no one else was allowed to smoke in her flat. Thomas always for some reason chose that armchair, and then leaned his head back against the headrest so that the ridiculous length of him (he was six feet four) stretched out horizontally, almost as if he were lying flat; he would cross his ankles and squint frowningly at his shoes.

Today he was wearing his disintegrating old trainers, not the brogues he'd bought for work; his unironed khaki shirt was half in and half out of his trousers. Christine, who hated uniforms, was almost ashamed at how handsome she found him in his obligatory work suit and tie, but she also loved him restored to his crumpled, worn-out old clothes, youth and beauty glowing steadily through them. Thomas was odd-looking, with a crooked nose and a big loose mouth, but she knew she wasn't the only one who found him beautiful. His tawny hair, pushed behind his ears, was curling at the shoulders, because he hadn't bothered to get it cut; his skin flared sensitively where the raw planes of his face had only recently overgrown their childish softness. From under his heavy lids, the green eyes flecked with hazel sent a lazy appealing glance, like Alan's. If she thought of Alan at all these days (she hadn't seen him more than five or six times in the past twenty years), it was only when Thomas's likeness to him took her by surprise.

"So I hear your father's getting married again."

"Who told you?" There was a flicker of solicitousness in his expression, in case she minded.

"Someone who knows Laura. Poor Laura."

Laura had been Alan's first wife, the one he was married to all through his affair with Christine, those long years ago. Laura had always made Thomas welcome in her home, even after Alan strayed a second time, and then a third, and then stayed away permanently. Thomas was close to his half brothers and sisters, and managed gracefully a whole complex of loyalties.

"Oh, I think Laura's O.K.," Thomas said. "I think she's pretty indifferent these days to what Dad's up to."

This wasn't what the person at the dinner party had told Christine.

"I hear the girl he's marrying is young enough to be his daughter."

Thomas couldn't help his grin: spreading, conspiratorial. He was easily entertained. "You know what he's like."

"Have you met her?"

"She's O.K. I reckon she knows what she's getting into. Put it this way—I don't think it was her intellectual qualities he fell for. I thought that you might be at college today," he added. "I only came here on the off-chance."

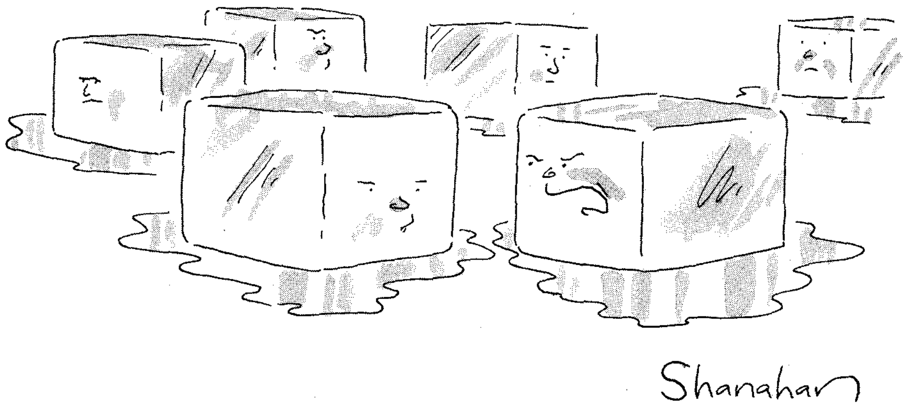
"Thursdays I usually work at home. Why aren't you in the office?"

"I phoned and told them I was ill. I haven't pulled a sickie for ages. I've got a lot of stuff going around in my head and I wanted some time out to really think about it. And I thought I might stop by to have a bit of a chat about something that's cropped up."

Christine was touched: he rarely came to her to talk about his problems. In fact, there had been almost no problems. He was an affable, sociable boy whose directness was of the easy and not the exacting kind.

Thomas heaved himself upright in the chair, so that his knees were jack-

RYAN McGINLEY, "UNTITLED (STAIRS)" (2000)



"Of course you could use a damn drink. We all could use a damn drink!"

• •

knifed up in front of his face; he stirred two spoons of sugar into his coffee and ate chocolate biscuits.

"Is it about your dad and this wedding?"

"God, no. That honestly isn't a big deal. I'm glad for him."

"Work?"

He made a face. "And other stuff."

Thomas had finished at Oxford the year before and had been working as an assistant to a Labour M.P., a woman, no one very special. All he did was photocopy and file and send standard answers to constituents' letters, but the idea was that this could lead to bigger and better things, some kind of political career. It was only an idea, being tested. Thomas didn't know whether a political career was what he really wanted. Christine thought he might be too finely constituted, too conscientious for it. On the other hand, she was proud of his realism, and that he was thinking unsentimentally about ways to get power and change things.

"I've got myself in a bit of a mess," Thomas said. "With Anna."

"Oh?"

He fished his tobacco and rolling papers out of a pocket and used the flat tops of his knees as a table.

"I seem to have got involved with somebody else."

"Oh, Thomas."

He told her about a girl he had met at work. He said that he hadn't liked her at first—he'd thought she was too full of herself. But then they'd had to work on some assignment together and he'd got to know her a lot better. He could talk to her like he'd never talked to anyone else. She was very bright. She wasn't good-looking in the way that Anna was good-looking.

"She's quite big," he said. "Not fat. Curvy. With this sort of messy black hair. Long."

Thomas's own hair was hanging down across his face as he rolled his cigarette, so Christine couldn't see his expression. She could hear, though, his voice thick with an excitement that she recognized as belonging to the first phase of infatuation, when even speaking about your lover, saying ordinary things about him or her, is a form of desire.

"The worst thing is," he said, shaking his hair back and looking frankly at her. "Well, not the worst thing. But they both have the same name. Not quite the same. She's called Annie."

Christine couldn't help a puff of laughter.

"I know," he said. "Shite, isn't it?" He laughed with her. "The two Anns."

"Have you told Anna?"

He shook his head. "I thought at first it was just, you know, nothing. Not worth upsetting her about."

"But it's something?"

He shrugged and opened his hands in a gesture of defenselessness, squinting in the smoke from the roll-up that wagged in his mouth. How was he to know? Nothing like this had ever happened to him before.

Christine felt protective of Anna, although she had sometimes thought her too sweet and dull for Thomas. How clearly she could imagine this new girl: less pretty, overweight, clever, treacherous. These were all the things that she herself had been; she was on her guard at once, as if against a rival.

"She's different," he said. "She's funny—she makes me laugh. She doesn't take everything too seriously."

"And how do you feel about deceiving Anna?"

He gulped his coffee. She saw him flooded with shame then, not able to trust himself to speak: an unpracticed liar.

"These things happen," she soothed. "We can't pretend they don't. Even if we were good, if we were perfectly and completely chaste, we can't control what happens in our imagination. So being good might only be another kind of lie."

When Christine had begun her affair with Alan, there had been a possibility of his leaving his wife and family. For a while, in fact, he had left, and they had lived together. Thomas was conceived during that time. It had not worked out, they had fought horribly, and Alan had been sick with missing his children. In the end, he had taken himself home. Such storms, such storms there had been in Christine's life then—with Alan, and with others, afterward. When she longed for her youth, those storms, and not the happy times, were what she missed. The excitement of upheaval, a universe open with possibility, the phone calls that changed everything, the conspiratorial consultations with girlfriends, the feverish packing for surprise trips, escaping out of the last thing or rushing to embrace the next. Perhaps Thomas remembered some of those adventures, too: late-night train journeys when he had sat beside her with big sleepless eyes, sucking at his pacifier, fingering the precious corner of his blanket, his little red suitcase packed with books and toys.

Later, once he was established at school, she had settled into a steadier routine for his sake. But perhaps now, when he had found himself infatuated and intoxicated and behaving badly, at some level of consciousness he'd recognized it as her terrain and come to her because he thought she would know what he should do next. Perhaps his coming to her with

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his own crisis was a kind of forgiveness, for those upheavals.

"What about work?" she said.

Thomas looked at her vaguely. Work seemed, of course, a mere straw, in relation to the great conflagration of his passionate life.

"You said there were work issues as well that you were worried about."

"Only the old question. I mean, here I am stuffing envelopes for an M.P. who voted for the war in Iraq. Should I stay inside the tent pissing out? Perhaps it would be more dignified to get out and do some pissing in."

"Dignified pissing."

"But we've been over all that so many times."

"Only now it's complicated because she's there at work? Annie."

"It would solve everything if I just took off and went to live by myself in Prague or somewhere. Budapest."

"Leave both of them, you mean?" Christine said. "Woman trouble." She sighed, making a joke of it.

She was suddenly quite sure that he would, in fact, move abroad for a while, even though he didn't yet know it himself and it had popped into his conversation only as a joke possibility. After much confabulation and self-interrogation and any number of painful scenes with his two girls, this was what he would do.

"I'd miss you if you moved to Prague," she said.

"Get a sabbatical. Come out and stay."

She loved having him near her in London. But as soon as she had imagined Prague she knew that it was what she wanted for him: something more than the slick game of opportunity and advancement, a broader and deeper initiation into old sophisticated Europe, into a grownup life with complications.

"I have to go," Thomas said.

He had looked at his watch three or four times in the last fifteen minutes.

"You're meeting Annie?"

"No," he lied.

Though he had made his confession to Christine, she wasn't even in her thoughts to follow him to wherever he was meeting his big, dark, clever girl. She was only his mother, after all. It might be Anna's night for Pilates or whatever it was she did. The lovers might have the whole evening ahead of them, after Annie had finished work, to sit in a hidden corner in a pub somewhere, crushing out cigarettes half smoked, going over and over the same broken bits of logic, pressing knees against knees under the table, getting excitedly drunker. Or to go back to her place. All that stuff.

By the time Thomas left, the sky outside Christine's window had changed again: the bank of gray-black cloud had broken up and swallowed the lemon lake; now tousled scraps of cloud were tumbling untidily in a brooding light. Christine had another hour to work before she finished for the day and showered and changed; she was meeting a friend for a film—a Bergman screening at the British Film Institute—and a late supper. She picked up her copy of "Good Morning, Midnight." Her name was on the flyleaf: Christine Logan, Girton College, 1971. She was certain that she had held this same copy in her hands the morning of the day that Thomas was born, in 1980—not his birthday but the day before, since he wasn't actually born until half past midnight. She had been working on her thesis then, typing up a new chapter to show her supervisor, checking every quotation carefully against her text, when she felt the first pain.

The first pain—the first sign she'd had that Thomas was coming, two weeks before his time—had been like a sharp tiny bell struck as a signal; feeling it had been more like hearing something, a very precise high note, from deep inside her swollen abdomen, which was pressed with some difficulty into the space between her chair and the little rickety desk she worked at. None of the other things that the midwives at the hospital had warned her to expect had happened—the show of bloody mucus or the waters breaking—only this little bell of pain, so small it was more pleasurable than unpleasant, zinging away from time to time inside her. She knew that she was supposed to delay going into the hospital for as long as she could, so she continued typing, her mind seeming to move at a pitch of high, free clarity between the words of the novel and her own extraordinary circumstance. All this went on in the sitting room of the little cottage she rented from Jesus College in those days, in the Kite in Cambridge. The cottage was gone now; it had been pulled down to make way for a new development.

Once, while she waited, she had got up from the desk and stared at her face in a tarnished old junk-shop mirror she kept propped up on the mantelpiece for the sake of its frame. She thought that only fifty years before, at the time when the Rhys novel was set, she might have stared at herself like this on the brink of the unknown ordeal and been justified in wondering whether she would survive it. In the novel, Sasha's baby died. Christine was not afraid, exactly, but she could not imagine what lay in wait for her on the far side of the hours to come. When she was at the hospital, for her antenatal appointments, she had sometimes passed new mothers walking out to a waiting car or a taxi, followed by nurses carrying their babies bundled in white shawls. She didn't have friends with babies; she didn't know what it would mean, to be responsible for a white-wrapped bundle of her own.

She had picked up the telephone once or twice to call Alan but cut herself off before she even finished dialling. Although the plan had always been for him to be there with her at the birth of their child, for the first time the idea of his large presence bothered her: he was a big tall man with a booming voice and a curling salt-and-pepper beard, a historian, a Marxist. I can manage this by myself, she had thought that morning, timing the little bells of pain, which began to ring louder and stronger. It was as if she had intuited with the first pang of Thomas's arrival, and quite rightly, that her delighted possession of her son would push apart whatever mechanism it was that had bound her to his father for those years of her youth.

Christine's thesis was on certain women writers of the early twentieth century. She had argued that in their novels and stories they had broken with the conventions deep-buried in the foundations of the fiction tradition: that all good stories end in marriage, and that the essential drive in plot is courtship, bringing men and women together. Katherine Mansfield's *femmes seules* and Woolf's solitaries represented a break that was at least as revolutionary, surely, as Lawrence's and Joyce's iconoclasm. In the late seventies, the automatic gesture of obeisance to feminism had not yet been internalized by academics, and an amused hostility was still the norm. Alan wouldn't read Christine's work then: he said once that he took no interest in the nuances of bourgeois ladies' hypersensibility. She had tolerated this attitude, at least at first; she had even been attracted by it, as if in his contemptuous maleness he were a huge handsome bear whose ferocity she had to take on, and tame, and teach.

When Thomas was four or five years old, he had asked her once if he was going to die. She wasn't sure where this exchange had taken place—on a beach, perhaps, although not on a summer day. She associated it vaguely with a windy walk across pale pebbles that were awkward underfoot, along the sea's rim of crisp-dried detritus: seaweed, plastic netting, bird bones. Perhaps it was on one of their trips to the Norfolk coast with Alan when he and she were still seeing each other.

She must have been carrying Thomas. She remembered his weight slipping on her hip.

"It's all right," Christine said. "Don't worry about dying. By the time you grow up they'll probably have invented some medicine so you won't have to."

She remembered Alan stopping abruptly. Perhaps she put Thomas down then and he went to dabble in the sea rubbish.

"I can't believe you just said that."

He was laughing, but she thought with certainty at that moment: he hates me. The conviction reverberated like a blow against armor; she tasted blood and she wanted to fight.

"What's wrong with saying it? I used to think that when I was a little girl."

"But it isn't true."

"Of course it's not true. It's something reassuring to keep you going until you're old enough. You know, like Heaven."

"If any adult had ever lied to me about anything so important, I'd never have forgiven them."

She was shocked at herself for a moment: she wondered if he was right. Then, recovering, she mocked him.

"But that's just what you're like, isn't it? You love to go around not forgiving people for things. How austere and rigorous it must make you feel. What a little prig of a child you must have been."

He opened his mouth to answer, closed it, and turned to stride away from her down the beach. She hurried raggedly after him, not finished, snatching Thomas up from whatever he was interested in: threading washed-up ringpulls on his fingers or poking a dead gull with a stick. In her memory a wind came whipping up, tearing out her words.

"So what would you have told him, then? If you're so truthful."

He wanted to keep his mouth shut against her but he couldn't resist giving his opinion, beautifully expressed. There had been a time when she would have hung on these words of his devotedly. "I'd tell him that without death life would be formless. That change is the life force."

Christine burst out with a loud snort of laughter. "Well, try that, then! Just try it. What d'you think about that, Thomas? Daddy says you have to die, but not to worry. It will give your life a nicer shape."

Thomas gave a rather stagy mew of despair, as if in fact he'd lost interest in the subject, and he snuggled his head reproachfully against Christine's lapel. Alan thought Christine encouraged him to be precocious. He walked away from them now, faster than they could follow, his shoulders in his black greatcoat bowed against the wind, head down, his hair blowing out behind. Then he turned around and walked backward, facing them, looking at them. Christine couldn't remember if that argument had actually been the end of things, or if they'd made a truce later that afternoon or that night, at whatever hotel or rented cottage they were staying in, and gone on patching things up for a while longer.

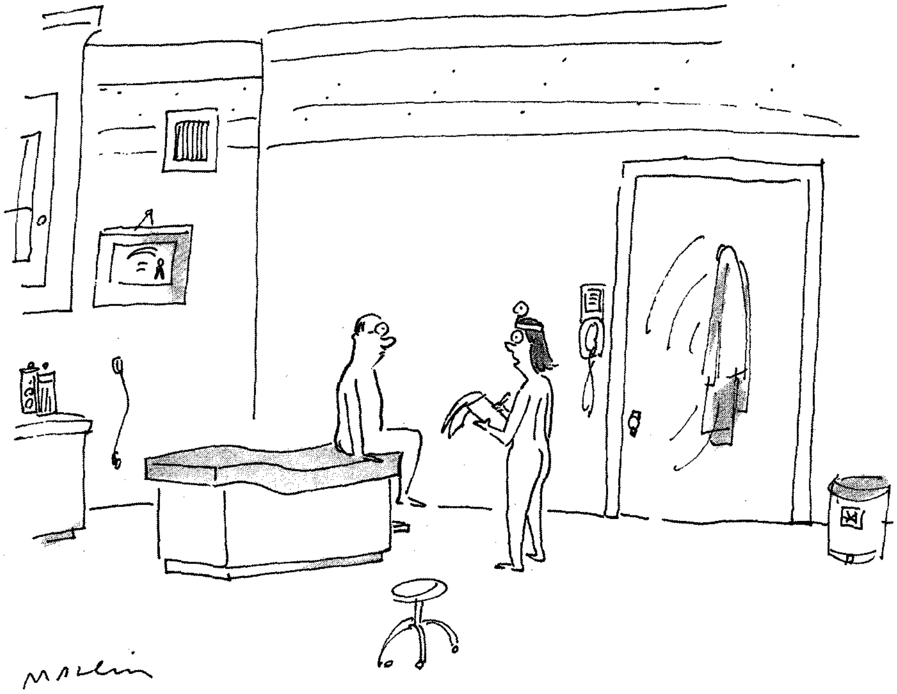
The morning after Thomas's visit, Christine was climbing the stairs to her office at the college when someone came running up below her.

"Dr. Logan?"

Christine paused, resting her pile of books and papers on the bannister; someone young with a blond head lifted to look up at her came around the stairwell with a clatter of heels.

"Dr. Logan? Do you mind if I just talk to you for a moment?"

Because she was expecting a student with a query about an essay, there was a



"O.K., can we get dressed now?"

disconcerting lapse of seconds before Christine registered that the blond head belonged to Anna, Thomas's girlfriend, whom she'd known for three years. Of course, there was no reason for Anna, who worked in the wardrobe department of the English National Opera, to be on campus: she had never been there before. Also, she had never called Christine Dr. Logan.

"Anna, darling, how lovely to see you. Whatever are you doing here? How did you find me?"

"I want to talk about Tom."

In one smooth movement, feeling in her bag for her office keys, Christine decided that her first loyalty was to Thomas's confidence. She turned on Anna a look wiped clear of any foreknowledge.

"Is something wrong?"

Anna's face was guilelessly open, sorrow stamped on it like a black bootprint. She could not speak until Christine had her door open and they were safely inside. Under the posters and potted plants, Christine put the kettle on—Anna nodded an indifferent assent—to make peppermint tea. Anna pressed her palms against her cheeks: her hands were big and pink and sensitive, like her ears, with fingertips reddened from sewing.

"He's seeing someone else."

At least Christine wouldn't pretend not to take her seriously.

"Tell me about it."

"I mean, I don't have any proof. Just the usual silly stuff. Times he's late coming home, things he says he's doing that don't sound quite right. Just something—like he's all the time slightly impatient with me, but then he's sorry for that and covering it up by being extra nice. I just know the way Tom would be if he were doing it."

"It could be nothing. I know he's the nicest boy in the world, but underneath all that he can be moody."

"I actually thought he might have talked to you. I know he came to see you yesterday. I haven't spoken to anyone else about this."

Anna had always treated Christine with tender respect. Now she scanned her intently with strained-open blue eyes, careless in her desperation. Love, this destroying kind of love, swelled the girl up, gave her a ferocity and an authority that Christine had never seen in her before.

She shook her head sympathetically. "He talked about work."

"He didn't say anything about me that struck you?"

"He worries about whether he's doing the right thing, in his job."

"Is that all? Are you sure? I have to know what he's thinking."

"He's bored stuffing envelopes for someone he doesn't believe in."

Anna sighed, frowning impatiently at Christine, or through her: she would know what she was looking for when she found it, and it wasn't this. She wasn't convinced that Christine was telling the whole truth. A pressured moment swayed in the air between them: Anna jostling roughly for more, Christine blandly resisting.

"He did mention wanting to travel in Europe. But I don't know how serious that was."

"You see. I've not heard anything about that. Where in Europe, exactly? When? Who with?"

"He was probably only talking about a holiday. Budapest, perhaps? He didn't say anything about who with."

"There. You see?"

"I suppose I simply took it that he meant alone."

Anna stood up from the swivel office chair and turned and stared out of the window at nothing, below: a nowhere space between the Humanities block and Social Sciences, furnished with a few benches and young trees. She was tall, the same height as Christine, but with a figure that Christine had never had: high full round breasts, a narrow graspable waist, long slender haunches that suggested some graceful running creature, a gazelle. Between her short cutoff top and the absurdly low waistband of her trousers was a long expanse of flawless goosefleshed golden skin, curving into a sweet round rump. The clothes seemed incidental; Anna's young nakedness was in the room between them. With a sharpness almost like longing, Christine was aware of Anna's piercings, even now that her back was turned: in her nose and her belly button, gold rings with little ruby-colored beads.

These young women didn't know what they had. They suffered because they couldn't have Thomas to keep, but they had the struggle over him, the game of pursuit and being pursued, and the sometime possession of him in the flesh. For as long as the thought lasted, that snatched possession felt to Christine like the only thing worth living for: a possibility of joy that was no longer available to the mothers of these children.

Anna turned from the window. Her face was blotched an ugly red with tears.

"What would you do?"

"Well, I'd ask him," Christine said at once. "Don't you think that he'll tell you the truth?"

"Yes," Anna said bleakly. "I expect he will."

At home Christine prepared an omelette for her supper. She washed lettuce hearts and vine tomatoes; she sliced cucumber and made a vinaigrette. She mashed parsley into a lump of butter with lemon juice, and sautéed a little tinned tuna in a pan with finely chopped shallots. When all this was ready she broke the eggs into a bowl, to beat them. The second egg had gone bad. It felt strange to the touch, the shell weak and scabbed, but even as she registered this it was too late—she had cracked the egg against the side of the bowl and a foul greenish liquid poured out between her fingers, the thin texture of water, not albumen. A stink of putrefaction thrust wildly, rudely, into the kitchen.

She didn't know what to do; she pressed her mouth and nose against her sleeve, not pulling the shell apart any farther, not wanting to see inside. The mess was too awful, too violently offensive, to pour down the drain; it would surely come back at her, and perhaps at her neighbors, for hours afterward. She found an empty peanut-butter jar with a lid, saved for recycling, tipped the whole lot into that, and screwed the lid on, only half allowing herself to look at it. Then she ran downstairs out of her flat to the bins outside, where she buried the jar deep among the rubbish bags.

Upstairs she opened all the windows, even though it was raining, ran water for long minutes down the sink. She bleached the egg bowl and the dishcloth she had used to wipe up the few drops of egg that had spattered on the counter; she washed her hands in the bathroom over and over. Still, every time she put her fingers to her nose she was haunted by the smell. The thought of the rest of her supper nauseated her; she tipped the salad and the tuna into the bin. She knew she was being irrational; she ought to phone a friend and make a joke out of her small disaster, and perhaps go out for a drink and something to eat. Instead she abandoned herself to sulking, lying on her side on the sofa, her hands clasped between her knees. The idea came to her out of nowhere that there would be a last time that she brought anyone home to make love in her bed. It was not yet, it might not be for years, but it would come, even though she might not recognize it until long afterward.

How could Christine envy Thomas's two girls? Who could want to be one of the two foolish Anns, desperate for him? Or to be Alan, with his beard shaven and his silvery hair clipped close to his skull, hoping to start out on the adventure of passion all over again? How much happier she was, how much less time and energy it took to be Thomas's mother: a relationship founded on one fixed and unalterable truth. Outside her spectacular arched window the wind threw rain in long ragged gusts across the housefronts and tore at the estate agents' signs, setting them flapping in crazy ecstasy. Christine told herself that she was glad she was on this side of the glass, but she lay still on her sofa for a long time, and after a while she turned her back on the view. ◆

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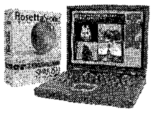

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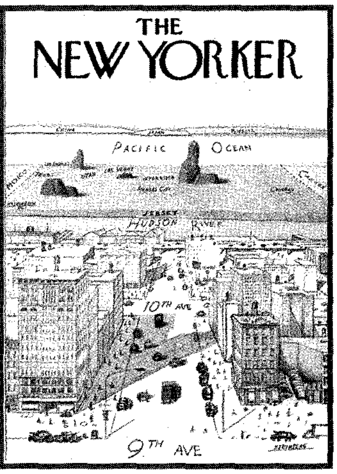
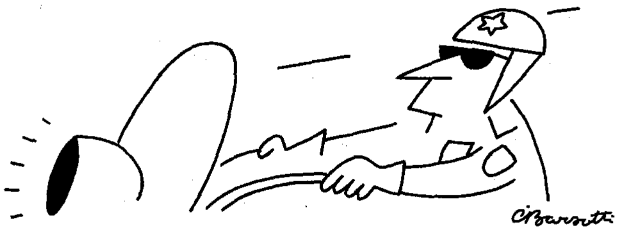




A CRITIC AT LARGE

THE UNPOLITICAL ANIMAL

How political science understands voters.

BY LOUIS MENAND

In every Presidential-election year, there are news stories about undecided voters, people who say that they are perplexed about which candidate's positions make the most sense. They tell reporters things like "I'd like to know more about Bush's plan for education," or "I'm worried that Kerry's ideas about Social Security don't add up." They say that they are thinking about issues like "trust," and whether the candidate cares about people like them. To voters who identify strongly with a political party, the undecided voter is almost an alien life form. For them, a vote for Bush is a vote for a whole philosophy of governance and a vote for Kerry is a vote for a distinctly different philosophy. The difference is obvious to them, and they don't understand how others can't see it, or can decide whom to vote for on the basis of a candidate's personal traits or whether his or her position on a particular issue "makes sense." To an undecided voter, on the other hand, the person who always votes for the Democrat or the Republican, no matter what, must seem like a dangerous fanatic. Which voter is behaving more rationally and responsibly?

If you look to the political professionals, the people whose job it is to know what makes the fish bite, it is clear that, in their view, political philosophy is not the fattest worm. "Winning Elections: Political Campaign Management, Strategy & Tactics" (M. Evans; $49.95) is a collection of articles drawn from the pages of *Campaigns & Elections: The Magazine for People in Politics*. The advice to the political professionals is: Don't assume that your candidate's positions are going to make the difference. "In a competitive political climate," as one article explains, "informed citizens may vote for a candidate based on issues. However, uninformed or undecided voters will often choose the candidate whose name and packaging are most memorable. To make sure your candidate has that 'top-of-mind' voter awareness, a powerful logo is the best place to start." You want to present your candidate in language that voters will understand. They understand colors. "Blue is a positive color for men, signaling authority and control," another article advises. "But it's a negative color for women, who perceive it as distant, cold and aloof. Red is a warm, sentimental color for women—and a sign of danger or anger to men. If you use the wrong colors to the wrong audience, you're sending a mixed message."

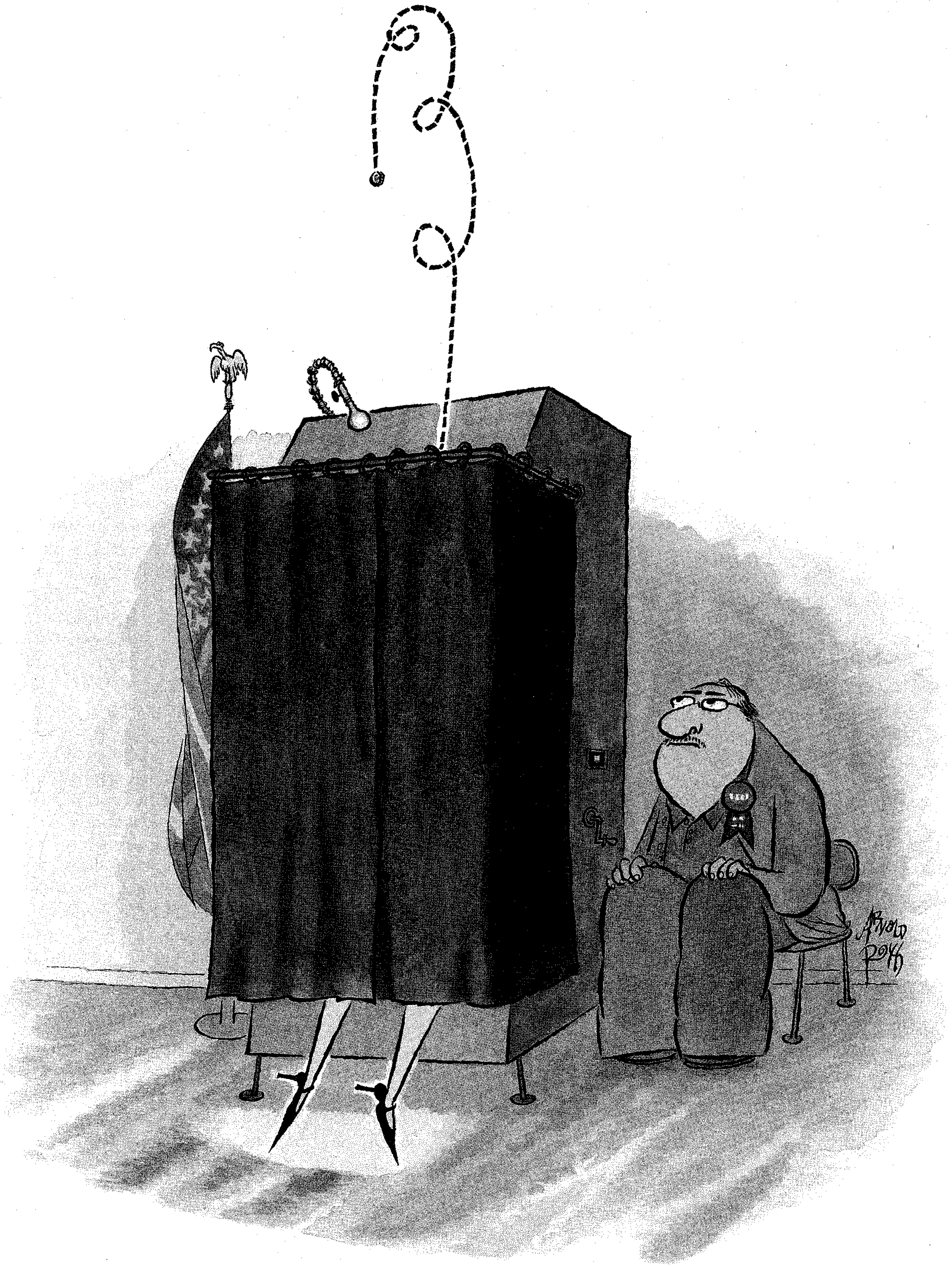
It can't be the case, though, that electoral outcomes turn on things like the color of the buttons. Can it? When citizens stand in the privacy of the booth and contemplate the list of those who bid to serve, do they really think, That's the guy with the red logo. A lot of anger there. I'll take my chances with the other one? In Civics 101, the model voter is a citizen vested with the ability to understand the consequences of his or her choice; when these individual rational choices are added up, we know the will of the people. How accurate is this picture?

Skepticism about the competence of the masses to govern themselves is as old as mass self-government. Even so, when that competence began to be measured statistically, around the end of the Second World War, the numbers startled almost everyone. The data were interpreted most powerfully by the political scientist Philip Converse, in an article on "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics," published in 1964. Forty years later, Converse's conclusions are still the bones at which the science of voting behavior picks.

Converse claimed that only around ten per cent of the public has what can be called, even generously, a political belief system. He named these people "ideologues," by which he meant not that they are fanatics but that they have a reasonable grasp of "what goes with what"—of how a set of opinions adds up to a coherent political philosophy. Non-ideologues may use terms like "liberal" and "conservative," but Converse thought that they basically don't know what they're talking about, and that their beliefs are characterized by what he termed a lack of "constraint": they can't see how one opinion (that taxes should be lower, for example) logically ought to rule out other opinions (such as the belief that there should be more government programs). About forty-two per cent of voters, according to Converse's interpretation of surveys of the 1956 electorate, vote on the basis not of ideology but of perceived self-interest. The rest form political preferences either from their sense of whether times are good or bad (about twenty-five per cent) or from factors that have no discernible "issue content" whatever. Converse put twenty-two per cent of the electorate in this last category. In other words, about twice as many people have no political views as have a coherent political belief system.

Just because someone's opinions don't square with what a political scientist recognizes as a political ideology doesn't mean that those opinions aren't coherent by the lights of some more personal system of beliefs. But Converse found reason to doubt this possibility. When pollsters ask people for their opinion about an issue, people generally feel obliged to

ARNOLD ROTH



When citizens enter the booth and look at the names of the candidates, are they really thinking, Do I choose the red guy or the blue guy?

have one. Their answer is duly recorded, and it becomes a datum in a report on "public opinion." But, after analyzing the results of surveys conducted over time, in which people tended to give different and randomly inconsistent answers to the same questions, Converse concluded that "very substantial portions of the public" hold opinions that are essentially meaningless—off-the-top-of-the-head responses to questions they have never thought about, derived from no underlying set of principles. These people might as well base their political choices on the weather. And, in fact, many of them do.

Findings about the influence of the weather on voter behavior are among the many surveys and studies that confirm Converse's sense of the inattention of the American electorate. In election years from 1952 to 2000, when people were asked whether they cared who won the Presidential election, between twenty-two and forty-four per cent answered "don't care" or "don't know." In 2000, eighteen per cent said that they decided which Presidential candidate to vote for only in the last two weeks of the campaign; five per cent, enough to swing most elections, decided the day they voted.

Seventy per cent of Americans cannot name their senators or their congressman. Forty-nine per cent believe that the President has the power to suspend the Constitution. Only about thirty per cent name an issue when they explain why they voted the way they did, and only a fifth hold consistent opinions on issues over time. Rephrasing poll questions reveals that many people don't understand the issues that they have just offered an opinion on. According to polls conducted in 1987 and 1989, for example, between twenty and twenty-five per cent of the public thinks that too little is being spent on welfare, and between sixty-three and sixty-five per cent feels that too little is being spent on assistance to the poor. And voters apparently do punish politicians for acts of God. In a paper written in 2004, the Princeton political scientists Christopher Achen and Larry Bartels estimate that "2.8 million people voted against Al Gore in 2000 because their states were too dry or too wet" as a consequence of that year's weather patterns. Achen and Bartels think that these voters cost Gore seven states, any one of which would have given him the election.

IF THERE IS NO GOD

If there is no God,
Not everything is permitted to man.
He is still his brother's keeper
And he is not permitted to sadden his brother,
By saying that there is no God.

—*Czeslaw Milosz*

(Translated, from the Polish, by the author and Robert Hass.)

All political systems make their claim to legitimacy by some theory, whether it's the divine right of kings or the iron law of history. Divine rights and iron laws are not subject to empirical confirmation, which is one reason that democracy's claims have always seemed superior. What polls and surveys suggest, though, is that the belief that elections express the true preferences of the people may be nearly as imaginary. When you move downward through what Converse called the public's "belief strata," candidates are quickly separated from ideology and issues, and they become attached, in voters' minds, to idiosyncratic clusters of ideas and attitudes. The most widely known fact about George H. W. Bush in the 1992 election was that he hated broccoli. Eighty-six per cent of likely voters in that election knew that the Bushes' dog's name was Millie; only fifteen per cent knew that Bush and Clinton both favored the death penalty. It's not that people know nothing. It's just that politics is not what they know.

In the face of this evidence, three theories have arisen. The first is that electoral outcomes, as far as "the will of the people" is concerned, are essentially arbitrary. The fraction of the electorate that responds to substantive political arguments is hugely outweighed by the fraction that responds to slogans, misinformation, "fire alarms" (sensational news), "October surprises" (last-minute sensational news), random personal associations, and "gotchas." Even when people think that they are thinking in political terms, even when they believe that they are analyzing candidates on the basis of their positions on issues, they are usually operating behind a veil of political ignorance. They simply don't understand, as a practical matter, what it means to be "fiscally conservative," or to have "faith in the private sector," or to pursue an "interventionist foreign policy." They can't hook up positions with policies. From the point of view of democratic theory, American political history is just a random walk through a series of electoral options. Some years, things turn up red; some years, they turn up blue.

A second theory is that although people may not be working with a full deck of information and beliefs, their preferences are dictated by something, and that something is élite opinion. Political campaigns, on this theory, are essentially struggles among the élite, the fraction of a fraction of voters who have the knowledge and the ideological chops to understand the substantive differences between the candidates and to argue their policy implications. These voters communicate their preferences to the rest of the electorate by various cues, low-content phrases and images (warm colors, for instance) to which voters can relate, and these cues determine the outcome of the race. Democracies are really oligarchies with a populist face.

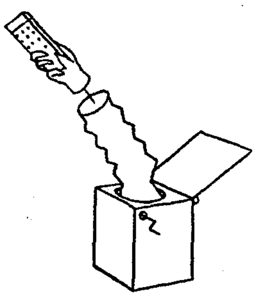
The third theory of democratic politics is the theory that the cues to which most voters respond are, in fact, adequate bases on which to form political preferences. People use shortcuts—the social-scientific term is "heuristics"—to reach judgments about political candidates, and, on the whole, these shortcuts are as good as the long and winding road of reading party platforms, listening to candidate debates, and all the other elements of civic duty. Voters use what Samuel Popkin, one of the proponents of this third theory, calls "low-information rationality"—in other words, gut reasoning—to reach political decisions; and this intuitive form of judgment proves a good enough substitute for its high-information counterpart in reflecting what people want.

An analogy (though one that Popkin is careful to dissociate himself from) would be to buying an expensive item like a house or a stereo system. A tiny fraction of consumers has the knowledge to discriminate among the entire range of available stereo components, and to make an informed choice based on assessments of cost and performance. Most of us rely on the advice of two or three friends who have recently made serious stereo-system purchases, possibly some online screen shopping, and the pitch of the salesman at J&R Music World. We eyeball the product, associate idiosyncratically with the brand name, and choose from the gut. When we ask "experts" for their wisdom, mostly we are hoping for an "objective" ratification of our instinctive desire to buy the coolest-looking stuff. Usually, we're O.K. Our tacit calculation is that the marginal utility of more research is smaller than the benefit of immediate ownership.

On the theory of heuristics, it's roughly the same with candidates: voters don't have the time or the inclination to assess them in depth, so they rely on the advice of experts—television commentators, political activists, Uncle Charlie—combined with their own hunches, to reach a decision. Usually (they feel), they're O.K. If they had spent the time needed for a top-to-toe vetting, they would probably not have chosen differently. Some voters might get it wrong in one direction, choosing the liberal candidate when they in fact preferred a conservative one, but their error is cancelled out by the voters who mistakenly choose the conservative. The will of the people may not be terribly articulate, but it comes out in the wash.

This theory is the most attractive of the three, since it does the most to salvage democratic values from the electoral wreckage Converse described. It gives the mass of voters credit for their decisions by suggesting not only that they can interpret the cues given by the campaigns and the élite opinion-makers but that the other heuristics they use—the candidate seems likable, times are not as good as they were—are actually defensible replacements for informed, logical reasoning. Popkin begins his well-regarded book on the subject, "The Reasoning Voter," with an example from Gerald Ford's primary campaign against Ronald Reagan in 1976. Visiting a Mexican-American community in Texas, Ford (never a gaffe-free politician) made the mistake of trying to eat a tamale with the corn husk, in which it is traditionally served, still on it. This ethnic misprision made the papers, and when he was asked, after losing to Jimmy Carter in the general election, what the lesson of his defeat was, Ford answered, "Always shuck your tamales." Popkin argues that although familiarity with Mexican-American cuisine is not a prerequisite for favoring policies friendly to Mexican-Americans, Mexican-Americans were justified in concluding that a man who did not know how to eat a tamale was not a man predisposed to put their needs high on his list. The reasoning is illogical: Ford was not running for chef, and it was possible to extrapolate, from his positions, the real difference it would make for Mexican-Americans if he were President rather than Reagan or Carter. But Mexican-Americans, and their sympathizers, felt "in their gut" that Ford was not their man, and that was enough.

The principal shortcut that people use in deciding which candidates to vote for is, of course, the political party. The party is the ultimate Uncle Charlie in American politics. Even élite voters use it when they are confronted, in the voting booth, with candidates whose names they have never seen before. There is nothing in the Constitution requiring candidates to be listed on the ballot with their party affiliations, and, if you think about it, the custom of doing so is vaguely undemocratic. It makes elections a monopoly of the major parties, by giving their candidates an enormous advantage—the advantage of an endorsement right there on the ballot—over everyone else who runs. It is easy to imagine a constitutional challenge to the practice of identifying candidates by party, but it is also easy to imagine how wild the effects would be if voters were confronted by a simple list of names with no identifying tags. Every election would be like an election for student-body president: pure name recognition.



Any time information is lacking or uncertain, a shortcut is generally better than nothing. But the shortcut itself is not a faster way of doing the math; it's a way of skipping the math altogether. My hunch that the coolest-looking stereo component is the best value simply does not reflect an intuitive grasp of electronics. My interest in a stereo is best served if I choose the finest sound for the money, as my interest in an election is best served if I choose the candidate whose policies are most likely to benefit me or the people I care about. But almost no one calculates in so abstract a fashion. Even voters who supported Michael Dukakis in 1988 agreed that he looked ridiculous wearing a weird helmet when he went for a ride in a tank, and a lot of those people felt that, taken together with other evidence of his manner and style of self-expression, the image was not irrelevant to the substance of his campaign. George H. W. Bush underwent a similar moment in 1992, when he was caught showing astonishment at the existence of scanners at supermarket checkout counters. Ideologues opposed to Bush were pleased to propose this as what psychologists call a "fast and frugal" means of assessing the likely effects of his economic policies.

When political scientists interpret these seat-of-the-pants responses as signs that voters are choosing rationally, and that representative government therefore really does reflect the will of the people, they are, in effect, making a heuristic of heuristics. They are not doing the math. Doing the math would mean demonstrating that the voters' intuitive judgments are roughly what they would get if they analyzed the likely effects of candidates' policies, and this is a difficult calculation to perform. One shortcut that voters take, and that generally receives approval from the élite, is pocketbook voting. If they are feeling flush, they vote for the incumbent; if they are feeling strapped, they vote for a change. But, as Larry Bartels, the co-author of the paper on Gore and the weather, has pointed out, pocketbook voting would be rational only if it could be shown that replacing the incumbent did lead, on average, to better economic times. Without such a demonstration, a vote based on the condition of one's pocketbook is no more rational than a vote based on the condition of one's lawn. It's a hunch.

Bartels has also found that when people do focus on specific policies they are often unable to distinguish their own interests. His work, which he summed up in a recent article for *The American Prospect*, concerned public opinion about the estate tax. When people are asked whether they favor Bush's policy of repealing the estate tax, two-thirds say yes—even though the estate tax affects only the wealthiest one or two per cent of the population. Ninety-eight per cent of Americans do not leave estates large enough for the tax to kick in. But people have some notion—Bartels refers to it as "unenlightened self-interest"—that they will be better off if the tax is repealed. What is most remarkable about this opinion is that it is unconstrained by other beliefs. Repeal is supported by sixty-six per cent of people who believe that the income gap between the richest and the poorest Americans has increased in recent decades, and that this is a bad thing. And it's supported by sixty-eight per cent of people who say that the rich pay too little in taxes. Most Americans simply do not make a connection between tax policy and the over-all economic condition of the country. Whatever heuristic they are using, it is definitely not doing the math for them. This helps make sense of the fact that the world's greatest democracy has an electorate that continually "chooses" to transfer more and more wealth to a smaller and smaller fraction of itself.

But who *ever* does the math? As Popkin points out, everybody uses heuristics, including the élite. Most of the debate among opinion-makers is conducted in shorthand, and even well-informed voters rely on endorsements and party affiliations to make their choices. The very essence of being an ideologue lies in trusting the label—liberal or conservative, Republican or Democrat. Those are "bundling" terms: they pull together a dozen positions on individual issues under a single handy rubric. They do the work of assessment for you.

It is widely assumed that the upcoming Presidential election will be decided by an electorate that is far more ideological than has historically been the case. Polls indicate much less volatility than usual, supporting the view that the public is divided into starkly antagonistic camps—the "red state–blue state" paradigm. If this is so, it suggests that we have at last moved past Converse's picture of an electoral iceberg, in which ninety per cent of the population is politically underwater. But Morris Fiorina, a political scientist at Stanford, thinks that it is not so, and that the polarized electorate is a product of élite opinion. "The simple truth is that there is no culture war in the United States—no battle for the soul of America rages, at least none that most Americans are aware of," he says in his short book "Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America" (Longman; $14.95). Public-opinion polls, he argues, show that on most hot-button issues voters in so-called red states do not differ significantly from voters in so-called blue states. Most people identify themselves as moderates, and their responses to survey questions seem to substantiate this self-description. What has become polarized, Fiorina argues, is the élite. The chatter—among political activists, commentators, lobbyists, movie stars, and so on—has become highly ideological. It's a non-stop "Crossfire," and this means that the candidates themselves come wrapped in more extreme ideological coloring. But Fiorina points out that the ideological position of a candidate is not identical to the position of the people who vote for him or her. He suggests that people generally vote for the candidate whose views strike them as closest to their own, and "closest" is a relative term. With any two candidates, no matter how far out, one will always be "closer" than the other.

Of course, if Converse is correct, and most voters really don't have meaningful political beliefs, even ideological "closeness" is an artifact of survey anxiety, of people's felt need, when they are asked for an opinion, to have one. This absence of "real opinions" is not from lack of brains; it's from lack of interest. "The typical citizen drops down to a lower level of mental performance as soon as he enters the political field," the economic theorist Joseph Schumpeter wrote, in 1942. "He argues and analyzes in a way which he would readily recognize as infantile within the sphere of his real interests. He becomes a primitive again. His thinking is associative and affective." And Fiorina quotes a passage from the political scientist Robert Putnam: "Most men are not political animals. The world of public affairs is not their world. It is alien to them—possibly benevolent, more probably threatening, but nearly always alien. Most men are not interested in politics. Most do not participate in politics."

Man may not be a political animal, but he is certainly a social animal. Voters do respond to the cues of commentators and campaigners, but only when they can match those cues up with the buzz of their own social group. Individual voters are not rational calculators of self-interest (nobody truly is), and may not be very consistent users of heuristic shortcuts, either. But they are not just random particles bouncing off the walls of the voting booth. Voters go into the booth carrying the imprint of the hopes and fears, the prejudices and assumptions of their family, their friends, and their neighbors. For most people, voting may be more meaningful and more understandable as a social act than as a political act.

That it is hard to persuade some people with ideological arguments does not mean that those people cannot be persuaded, but the things that help to convince them are likely to make ideologues sick—things like which candidate is more optimistic. For many liberals, it may have been dismaying to listen to John Kerry and John Edwards, in their speeches at the Democratic National Convention, utter impassioned bromides about how "the sun is rising" and "our best days are still to come." But that is what a very large number of voters want to hear. If they believe it, then Kerry and Edwards will get their votes. The ideas won't matter, and neither will the color of the buttons. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

And They're Off!

The Naked Olympics, *by Tom Perrottet (Random House; $12.95).* This lively account of the classical Olympics portrays them as "the Woodstock of antiquity," and claims that the Games, while taken seriously, were also where Greeks gathered for a five-day debauch. A prostitute could earn a year's wages in the course of the tournament, Thessalonian peddlers sold love potions made from horse's sweat and minced lizard, and pentathletes competed to the accompaniment of flutes, perhaps the ancient equivalent of stadium rock. The festival offered beauty pageants and Homer-recitation contests, numerologists and fire-swallowers, and such culinary delicacies as roasted sow's womb. Athletic events also fuelled a thriving pickup scene: a message etched into the wall of a stadium at Nemea reads, "Look up Moschos in Philippi—he's cute."

Ancient Greek Athletics, *by Stephen G. Miller (Yale; $35).* This exhaustive survey by a Berkeley archeologist covers not only the Olympic Games but the related festivals at Delphi, Isthmia, and Nemea (where Miller is in charge of excavations), and uses evidence from vase painting, statuary, and the remains of ancient stadiums to elucidate such details as *halteres* (special weights used by long jumpers) and the *hysplex*, a complicated gate intended to prevent false starts. By our standards, many of the events were brutal; an unfortunate boxer named Kreugas had his intestines ripped out in a bout at Nemea. But Miller identifies a specifically Greek ideal in the fact that the athletes, regardless of social standing, competed on equal footing and would even submit to flogging if they fouled. This is a far cry from the behavior of the Roman Emperor Nero, who breezed through Greece in A.D. 67, winning some eleven hundred events; at Olympia, he fell out of his chariot and failed to finish the race but was still awarded the victory crown.

Wrestling with the Ancients, *by Alexander Kitroeff (Greekworks.com; $32).* Kitroeff recounts the history of modern Greece's role in the Olympics, from experimental Olympiads in the nineteenth century—events included diving to pick up a five-drachma coin from the seabed and balancing on an inflatable greased sack—to the bureaucratic fumbles in the preparations for the current Games. Victorian enthusiasts were inspired by Greece's classical heritage, providing the Greek state with an opportunity to advance its lowly political and economic status. This resulted in the invention of some bizarre traditions, involving ancient temples and women dressed as priestesses. (The ritual of the Olympic-torch relay was actually a German idea, dreamed up for the infamous Berlin Games of 1936.) Kitreoff shrewdly exposes the anxieties latent in Greek evocations of past glory. The Greeks, as usual, have a word for it: *progonoplēxia*, which means "being struck by ancestors."

Facing Athens, by *George Sarrinikolaou (North Point; $18).* Born in Athens in 1970, Sarrinikolaou came to America at the age of ten; more than two decades later, as Greece prepares for the Olympics, he returns as a journalist. Trawling the ancient streets, he finds that in Athens life itself has become a competition, with almost half the national population crowded into the small capital, vying for "money, space, sex, even air." Corruption is the city's tragic flaw, as the author learns firsthand when his grandfather falls ill: a surgeon stops mid-operation and appears, bloodstained, before the family to demand more money. Writing with lucidity and restraint, Sarrinikolaou allows images to quietly resonate: in a night club, nouveau-riche Greeks shower singers with hundreds of euros' worth of carnations; it is carnations, too, which are later tossed after his grandfather's coffin into a concrete grave.

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BOOKS

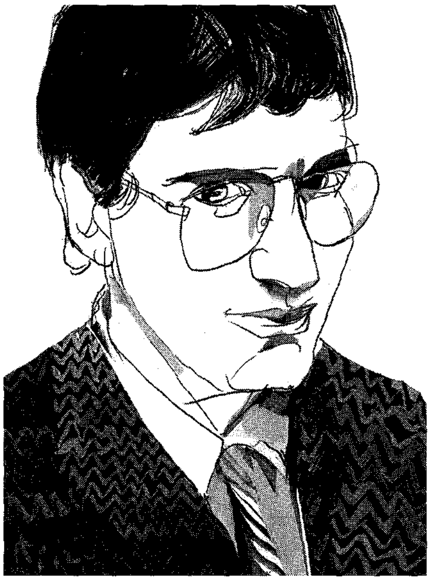
ANATOLIAN ARABESQUES

A modernist novel of contemporary Turkey.

BY JOHN UPDIKE

Orhan Pamuk's new novel, "Snow" (translated from the Turkish by Maureen Freely; Knopf; $26), abounds with modernist tracer genes. Like Proust's "Remembrance of Things Past," it bares its inner gears of reconstituted memory and ends by promising its own composition. Its hero, a poet, goes by the name of Ka, a hard-to-miss allusion to Kafka's K., the hero of "The Castle." Its setting, the forlorn provincial city of Kars—though *kar* means "snow," Kars is an actual place, in Turkey's northeastern corner, near Armenia; it was destroyed by Tamerlane in 1386 and occupied by Russia off and on in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—suggests, in four hectic days during which the city is snowbound, the mountainous, debate-prone microcosm of Thomas Mann's sanatorium in "The Magic Mountain," with a lethal whiff of Dostoyevsky's unnamed "our town" in "The Possessed." The airy spirit of postmodernism also haunts the shadows and spiral staircases of Pamuk's intricate narrative. Like Italo Calvino, Pamuk has a passion for pattern-making; he maps Kars as obsessively as Joyce did Dublin and marshals the nineteen poems that Ka writes there into the form of a diagrammatic snowflake. Not that "Snow" doesn't flow, with suspense at every dimpled vortex. Like Raymond Queneau, Pamuk is gifted with a light, absurdist touch, spinning out farcical plot developments to the point of implying that any plot, in this indifferent and chaotic universe, is farcical. He is attracted to the unreal reality, the false truth, of theatrical performance, and "Snow," in its political aspect, pivots on two nights of performance at the Kars National Theatre, in which illusion and reality are confoundingly entwined.

The comedy of public events, where protest and proclamation rapidly age into melodramatic cliché, overlays certain tragic realities of contemporary Turkey: the poverty of opportunity that leads unemployed men to sit endlessly in teahouses watching television; the tension between the secularism established by Kemal Atatürk in the nineteen-twenties and the recent rise of political Islam; the burning issue of women's head scarves; the cultural divide between a Westernized élite and the theistic masses. In its geography, Turkey straddles Europe and Asia; its history includes a triumphant imperial episode under the Ottoman sultans and, after long decline, a secular, modernizing revolution under Atatürk. Tradition there wears not only the fez and the turban but the uniform of the Islam-resistant Army.



Orhan Pamuk

RICCARDO VECCHIO

Ka, a forty-two-year-old, unmarried Istanbul native who for twelve years has lived as a political exile in Germany, comes to Kars, which he briefly visited twenty years ago, in order to investigate and report on, for a friend's newspaper, a local epidemic of suicide among young women, and to look up a university classmate, the beautiful İpek, who, he has learned, is separated from her husband, Muhtar. Muhtar, another old acquaintance, is running for mayor; this election is one of the threads that are all but buried in the subsequent days beneath a veritable blizzard of further complications and characters. The Anatolian venue, its deteriorating architecture poetically redolent of former Armenian and Russian inhabitants, is populated by Turks whose names have, to an American reader, a fairy-tale strangeness: İpek, Kadife, Zahide, Sunay Zaim, Funda Eser, Güner Bener, Hakan Özge, Mesut, Fazıl, Necip, Teslime, Abdurraham Öz, Osman Nuri Çolak, Tarkut Ölçün, and (Ka's full name, which he suppresses) Kerim Alakuşoğlu.

In his temporary role of journalist, Ka is given access to a succession of local viewpoints, ranging from that of the deputy governor (who tells him, "If unhappiness were a genuine reason for suicide, half the women in Turkey would be killing themselves") and the benign religious teacher Sheikh Saadettin Efendi to that of the outlaw terrorist Blue and İpek's sister, the scarf-wearing Kadife, who in the end proposes that women commit suicide to show their pride: "The moment of suicide is the time when they understand best how lonely it is to be a woman, and what being a woman really means." Early in Ka's visit, İpek tersely sums up the situation for him: "The men give themselves to religion, and the women kill themselves." When he asks why, she responds with "a look that told him he would get nowhere by pressing her for quick answers." But the question, in the course of more than four hundred pages, pales beside more vividly animated issues: Ka's revived ability to write poems; his tortuous campaign to persuade İpek to marry him and join him in the marginal existence of an exiled Turkish poet in Frankfurt; his debates with several young students (Necip, Fazıl) at the Kars religious high school over whether or not he and other Europeanized Turks are inevitably atheists; and, in the most farcical-tragical twist of plot, a violent Kemalist (pro-secular, anti-political-Islamist) coup in the snowbound municipality, engineered from the stage by the veteran itinerant actor Sunay Zaim.

Ka, who on his first day in Kars witnesses the assassination of an education official who had forbidden head scarves, becomes increasingly involved in many-sided intrigues and shuttles back and forth like the hero of a thriller; but he is not believable as such, possessing, as he does, a preoccupying ear for the poems being dictated to him by a higher power and a constant concern with his own uncertainties. Does he believe in God or not? Is happiness worth having? He decides, after an ecstatic interlude with İpek, that "the greatest happiness in life was to embrace a beautiful, intelligent girl and sit in a corner writing poetry." But even this unexceptional conclusion melts away under his doubts: he foresees that in Frankfurt a "crushing, soul-destroying pain would eat away at their happiness." And the handsome Blue, whose main terrorist activity seems to be seducing women, assures him, "People who seek only happiness never find it."

Dithering, reflective Ka, the embodiment of Turkish ambivalence, is, we learn, a Gemini. He acquires a near-twin (this author has a weakness for near-twins, for men who interpenetrate each other, like the seventeenth-century Italian slave and his Muslim master in "The White Castle," or like Necip and Fazıl in this novel) when "Orhan the novelist" takes on an increasingly voluble first-person voice and presence. Orhan, it turns out, has travelled to Kars to investigate the adventures of his friend Ka four years after they occurred. The narrative's subtext emerges as a sophisticated and esteemed writer's aporia—his bafflement—in the face of his nation's backwardness, superstition, and misery. What do Ka's inner states—the bliss of intermittent inspiration, the romantic dreams of erotic conquest, his intense nostalgia for a sheltered childhood, his flitting sense that Islam is correct and God does exist—have to do with the world's economic and political facts? His is the social class that left Islam to the servants and welcomed military coups, with their cozy curfews and radio-broadcast martial music. When Ka's friend and rival Muhtar is beaten by the police, "Ka imagined that Muhtar had found redemption in this beating; it might have released him from the guilt and spiritual agony he felt at the misery and stupidity of his country." The only lines that are quoted from Ka's nineteen suddenly inspired poems run:

Even if your mother came down from heaven to take you into her arms,
Even if your wicked father let her go without a beating for just one night,
You'd still be penniless, your shit would still freeze, your soul would still wither, there is no hope!
If you're unlucky enough to live in Kars, you might as well flush yourself down the toilet.

The unlucky, however, protest: during a political meeting that pathetically, comically, endearingly struggles to frame a statement for the *Frankfurter Rundschau*, a passionate young Kurd cries, "We're not stupid, we're just poor!" He goes on, "When a Westerner meets someone from a poor country, he feels deep contempt. He assumes that the poor man's head must be full of all the nonsense that plunged his country into poverty and despair." The author himself, arriving at what he terms "perhaps . . . the heart of our story," asks:

> How much can we hope to understand those who have suffered deeper anguish, greater deprivation, and more crushing disappointments than we ourselves have known? Even if the world's rich and powerful were to put themselves in the shoes of the rest, how much would they really understand the wretched millions suffering around them? So it is when Orhan the novelist peers into the dark corners of his poet friend's difficult and painful life: How much can he really see?

Thus the aesthetic and private passions so crucial to Ka double back, in a way, upon politics. Empathy knits a society together as well as enables works of imagination. But do the rich and powerful, having once imagined their way into the shoes of the less fortunate, change course and renounce all they have, as both Buddha and Jesus advised? And would it do enough good if they did? Is not conflict, between classes and nations both, often between groups that understand each other all too well? They compete for the same prize, the same land, the same control of resources. Pamuk's conscience-ridden and carefully wrought novel, tonic in its scope, candor, and humor, does not incite us, even in our imaginations, to overthrow existing conditions in Turkey. When the Kars coup occurs, the enthusiasm among unemployed youths leads to the dry authorial comment "They seemed to think that last night's events marked the beginning of a new age, in which immorality and unemployment would no longer be tolerated; it was as if they thought the army had stepped in expressly to find them jobs." Such realistic fatalism, and the poet's duty "to hear the hidden music that is the source of all art" and to believe that "life had a secret geometry," drains "Snow" 's ideological contests of blood. We could care less, but not much less. Ka has a drifting, ghostly presence that becomes exasperatingly mired in the role of negotiator, schemer, man of action; it wasn't clear, at least to this reader, what his decisive action, for which he suffers in the end, was. Nor is his love for İpek, beautiful and wise as she is conjured to be, very involving. The lovers' exchanges have an enigmatic bleakness, traceable perhaps to Hemingway:

> "I learned everything they taught us about Islam, but then I forgot it. Now it's as if everything I know about Islam is from *The Message*—you know, that film starring Anthony Quinn." Ka smiled. "It was showing not long ago on the Turkish channel in Germany—but, for some strange reason, in German. You're here this evening, aren't you?"
>
> "Yes."
>
> "Because I want to read you my poem again," said Ka, as he put his notebook into his pocket. "Do you think it's beautiful?"
>
> "Yes, really, it's beautiful."
>
> "What's beautiful about it?"
>
> "I don't know, it's just beautiful," said İpek. She opened the door to leave.
>
> Ka threw his arms around her and kissed her on the mouth.

Maybe—though Maureen Freely's translation is fluent and lucid throughout—it reads better in Turkish. If at times "Snow" seems attenuated and opaque, we should not forget that in Turkey, insofar as it partakes of the Islamic world's present murderous war of censorious fanaticism versus free speech and truth-seeking, to write with honest complexity about such matters as head scarves and religious belief takes courage. Pamuk, relatively young as he is, at the age of fifty-two, qualifies as that country's most likely candidate for the Nobel Prize, and the near-assassination of Islam's last winner must cross his mind. To produce a major work so frankly troubled and provocatively bemused and, against the grain of the author's usual antiquarian bent, entirely contemporary in its setting and subjects, took the courage that art sometimes visits upon even its most detached practitioners. ◆

ON TELEVISION

SEE HOW THEY RUN

A Presidential popularity contest.

BY NANCY FRANKLIN

As a break from this season's Presidential campaign, you might check out R. J. Cutler's unreality series "American Candidate," on Showtime on Sunday nights. It has the virtue of featuring none of the candidates who are actually running for President; nor does it have any snide real-life running mates who stoop to such tactics as taking words like "sensitivity" out of context in order to make the other guy sound like a New Age pantywaist—and actually seem to win points in some circles by doing so. "American Candidate" isn't a polemical show; it doesn't attempt to win anyone over to a particular point of view. Rather, it aims to highlight the political process and perhaps bring some new players to the national stage (though some of the contestants on the show are more fit to be players in the national sandbox—cable-news talk shows).

Presidential wannabes race to the finish on "American Candidate."

EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM

"American Candidate" has been in the works for several years: Cutler and his producing partners were originally planning to make a documentary for HBO tracking the progress of a young person who hoped to run for President in 2012. But the show has ended up as a contest, in which ten people vie for the privilege of being a "real"—that is, fake—candidate for President. Each week, the contestants, who in order to get on the show sent in videos making a case for their worthiness (the same process used by less high-minded reality shows), have to go around the country performing tasks that are faced by real politicos, such as holding a press conference or speaking at a rally, and at the end of every episode they are ranked by the number of people they've been able to persuade to make a phone call in support of their candidacy. At that point, Montel Williams, the show's overly solemn host, announces which also-ran is getting the boot. The show will conclude on October 10th, after viewers have voted for one of the last two candidates standing by calling a toll-free number or sending a text message. (They can also vote with their remotes, as many already have; the show is not exactly killing in the ratings.) The winner will receive two hundred thousand dollars and "a chance to address the nation."

Cutler, who was a producer of D. A. Pennebaker and Chris Hegedus's "The War Room," the behind-the-scenes documentary about the spin doctors who managed Bill Clinton's 1992 Presidential campaign, and a co-director of a movie about Oliver North's 1994 Senate campaign, has a longtime interest in politics and, in general, a curiosity about how things happen. His production company is called Actual Reality Pictures, but in "American Candidate," unlike in his earlier work, there is no actual reality. The show isn't "meta," either; it doesn't get into the way that media coverage affects the events it's covering. Exposure—and the politics of getting exposure—is not the story, as it ended up being in the case of the not-quite-real and not-quite-fake "K Street," the George Clooney and Steven Soderbergh project that ran on HBO last fall. In that show, the consultant James Carville, playing himself, suggested a joke to Howard Dean that Dean ended up using in an actual debate—a blurring of fiction and reality that itself became a story. In order to strip the electoral process down to its purest state, Cutler has eliminated a muddying real-world element from "American Candidate": contestants don't have to engage in the dirty business of fund-raising. But you can't take money out of elections, and corporate sponsors have filled the vacuum: Verizon Wireless provided the phone services used for voting; Amazon.com provided computers, furniture, and office supplies.

At the beginning of the series, Williams walks along the reflecting pool in front of the Washington Monument and lays out the show's premise: "What if it were really true that in America any little boy or girl could grow up to be President? . . . What if you didn't . . . go to the right schools? What if your gender or the person you love or the color of your skin didn't matter at all?" True, so far no little girl has grown up to be President—but one did grow up to be a Vice-Presidential candidate, and in the past four decades alone we have seen a graduate of a Quaker college, a peanut farmer from rural Georgia, a lifeguard from Dixon, Illinois, and a boy from a troubled home in Hope, Arkansas, become President. The "right" college to me is the wrong college to someone else; there are people who are inclined to vote *against* a candidate just because he went to Harvard. (For all you Princeton-haters out there, here's a little gift: Ralph Nader was in the Class of 1955.) The contours of the playing field are set long before someone decides to run for President: the woman on "American Candidate" who works for a New York public-relations firm specializing in political strategy will probably have more resources to draw on than the North Carolina schoolteacher. Politically, she has money in the bank—which is how you get real money in the bank. And yet: Chrissy Gephardt, a former social worker and a daughter of Representative Richard Gephardt, who probably had better connections than anyone else on the show, was the first "American Candidate" aspirant to get the axe.

Whether or not the quest for purity in politics is a meaningful one to begin with, "American Candidate" doesn't hold to the values it seems to espouse. It's as packaged as can be: we get little more than repetitive sound bites from the contestants, who, chosen to represent "diversity," are presented for the most part as single-issue drones. "American Candidate" isn't trying to remove the element of entertainment from politics—how could you, even if you wanted to?—and to the extent that it keeps our interest it does so by using tricks borrowed from "Survivor" and "The Amazing Race." Cutler's lack of cynicism has produced good work in the past, but any hopes that he may have had for this gimmicky elementary-level civics lesson have been overtaken by the rigorous course in political science that everyone in the country has been taking in the past few years; his show doesn't satisfy the appetite we've cultivated for real politics. Still, given Cutler's own interests, I suspect that he might not be completely displeased to hear that his show pales beside something more important and urgent that already has, and deserves, our full attention.

"Entourage," the half-hour comedy series on HBO that follows "Six Feet Under" on Sunday nights (its first, eight-episode season ends on September 12th, but the series will return next year), is the kind of show that makes viewers feel smart. It's an inside job—a show about a young movie star and the posse of friends who hang with him, based on the life of a once young movie star famous for having a posse of friends and factotums—and you feel flattered by its assumption that you get its jokes about the fickle and idiot-rich nature of show business. "Entourage" focusses on four characters: Vince (Adrian Grenier), a newly hot box-office phenom, and the three friends who share an underdecorated mansion with him. One is his half brother Johnny, who is also an actor but is not as good-looking and not as successful as Vince—his job is to cook for the house and to make Vince feel magnanimous. (One of the show's sly moves was to cast Kevin Dillon, the younger brother of Matt Dillon, as Johnny, a role that roughly parallels his own career, and Dillon makes the most of it.) The others are Turtle (Jerry Ferrara), a foul-mouthed schlub who fetches Vince's dry cleaning and tries to score with the lesser of the babes who find their way into Vince's orbit, and Eric (Kevin Connolly), the designated driver, as it were, of the group. Eric acts as Vince's manager, and he is the only one who seems interested in, or capable of, having adult relationships. Vince grew up with these guys, and he imported them from Queens to serve him and protect him from ever having to lift a finger again.

"Entourage," which was inspired by the large-living ways of Mark Wahlberg—the person who came up with the idea was a member of his posse, and both he and Wahlberg are producers of the show—doesn't actively look for the downside of these men's infantile symbiosis. It does something more interesting, which is to make relentless fun of Hollywood without condemning the people who end up there. The four friends may be developmentally arrested—they actually push each other into groups of girls, like fifth graders—but they do watch out for one another, and even though Vince is close to being a cipher he has the sense to appreciate his good luck. The show's basically generous perspective allows it to be merciless: it skewers Hollywood mores and the shortsightedness of Vince's Lost Boys, who seem to live only to score as much booty as they can—running shoes, sex, a home theatre. (Johnny even pockets the batteries from someone else's remote.) Who knows, maybe that is the essence of stardom: free stuff. ♦

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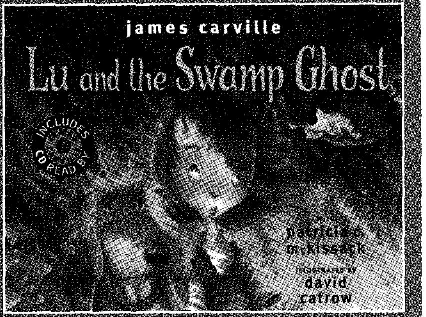

In *Lu and the Swamp Ghost*, political consultant and best-selling author James Carville teams up with award-winning children's book author Patricia C. McKissack to create a story about lending a helping hand. The book is based on an episode in the life of Carville's mother, Lucille (known as "Miz Nippy"), who grew up in rural southern Louisiana during the Great Depression.

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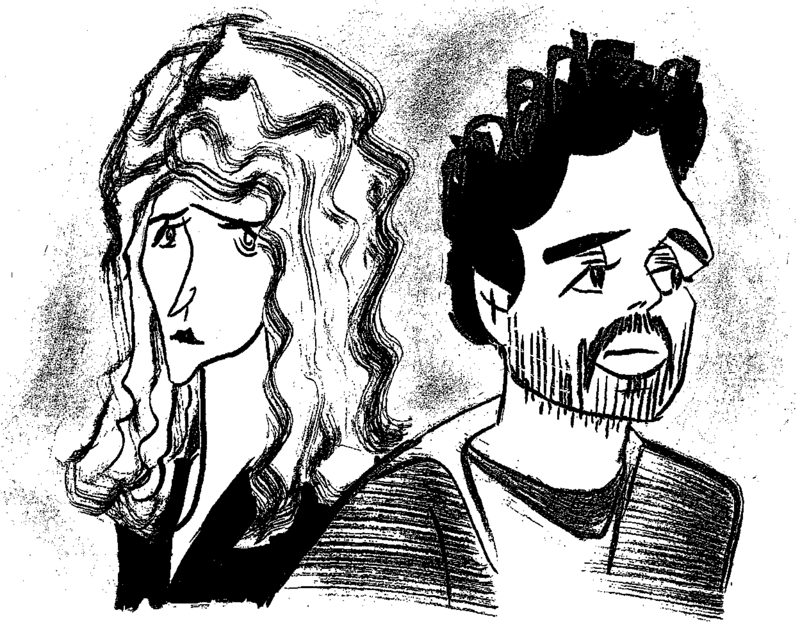
"We Don't Live Here Anymore."

BY DAVID DENBY



TOM BACHTELL

Laura Dern and Mark Ruffalo in a movie based on stories by Andre Dubus.

The great actress Laura Dern looks like an Alice who has wandered a bit too far into Wonderland. Dern has a lengthy, skinny torso, a long neck, and a back like a drawn bow, and when she stretches that body in anger or sensual delight and then lets it snap or crumple—as she did in David Lynch's "Wild at Heart" (1990) and as the slatternly, beer-swilling Ruth Stoop in "Citizen Ruth" (1996)—you feel as if something primal were happening right in front of your eyes. Modern in sexuality, classic in rage, this actress reaches for extremes. In the vivid domestic drama "We Don't Live Here Anymore," which is easily the best American movie so far this year, Dern gives an enormous, fully emotional performance, but she never ceases to play her character, a housewife in a troubled marriage—she never becomes a diva. Terry Linden lives in an old, dark-panelled house in a small New England town with her husband Jack (Mark Ruffalo), two little kids, and a pile of laundry that mounts like an accusation. Terry, it seems, can't quite stay on top of the housework. Instead of cleaning up, she fondles a wineglass in the afternoons, in part because Jack, whom she's still crazy about after a decade of marriage, is beginning to slide away. She comes after him, he attacks her for being lazy, and the two slam away at each other like middleweights. A halfhearted English professor at a local college, Jack is overwhelmed by his adoring wife—he feels he isn't worthy of her in some way, and his guilt is making him cruel. He's cheating on Terry with her best friend, Edith (Naomi Watts), who's married to Hank (Peter Krause), a colleague of his at the college. For a while, afraid of chasing Jack away completely, Terry doesn't let her anger all the way out, but when he pushes her into Hank's arms she blows up. "We Don't Live Here Anymore" can be seen as many things—a chronicle of two endangered marriages, an anatomy of adultery, a visual essay about a year's passage in a country town—but it's also a story about a good and kind woman who loses her temper, and when Dern lets go she leaves you shaken.

Many of us are wary of domestic drama. There's too much of it around—on television, on the stage, and at home. Who wants more? Movies devoted to marriage and family (I'm leaving out the Steve Martin and Tim Allen family comedies) have to be absolutely right in texture and nuance, the way "Shoot the Moon" was, twenty-two years ago, or they fall into a nagging banality. The large-scale, Oscar-winning "American Beauty" had Kevin Spacey at his nasty peak and a glowing red-and-black visual scheme, but, despite a success like that, the big studios are probably right to avoid serious domestic drama; independent filmmakers, working for an audience attuned to a harsh look at everyday life, stand a better chance of getting things right. Such recent independent productions as "You Can Count on Me" and "In the Bedroom" feel like examples of an art form that has arrived at a point of equilibrium—the point at which the production resources at hand are perfectly adequate to express the kind of intimate meanings that the filmmakers are striving for. As it happens, when the screenwriter Larry Gross ("48 HRS.") adapted Andre Dubus's extraordinary novellas "We Don't Live Here Anymore" and "Adultery" into a screenplay in the late seventies, he couldn't get anyone to produce it. Gross waited a long time. After the success, in 2001, of "In the Bedroom," also adapted from Dubus's work, he revised his screenplay, and the production came together at last, at a cost of $3.9 million, which is roughly one-sixteenth of an average big-studio budget; the completed picture was picked up for distribution by the boutique division of Warner Bros., Warner Independent Pictures. The movie industry of 2004 may be bloated and dysfunctional in many ways, yet, at the fringes, it supports some tough little movies.

Gross did a superb job of combining scenes and dialogue from Dubus's stories into a terse, seamless, devastatingly effective whole. (A few critics have noticed some attitudes and artifacts left over from the seventies, but these anachronisms don't lessen the movie's power.) Part of the exhilaration produced by "We Don't Live Here Anymore" derives from the sheer dangerous intelligence of the material, and from the trust that Gross and the director, John Curran, place in us by refusing to simplify it. The filmmakers expect us to understand that the two male characters are second-rate teachers and second-rate men, too; that a perceptive woman like Terry should have her own career; that both couples got married when they were far too young. The men teach in the same department, and they have the kind of needling, competitive relationship—running together, exchanging opinions of women—that harbors both antagonism and genuine sympathy. The women are close, too, so each act of adultery deceives not only a spouse but a friend. These four men and women know practically everything there is to know about one another; lying is the only way they can maintain their privacy. Betrayal is in the air, though "We Don't Live Here Anymore" is the very opposite of the kind of chic, poisonously clever movies about adultery—"Accident" (1967), "The Romantic Englishwoman" (1975)—that Joseph Losey used to make. The consequences of every act are fully developed, including the balky unhappiness of the young children, who resist any alteration in family life like tree stumps in the midst of a flood.

With one exception—Hank, a habitual philanderer who feels little but ambition and lust—the characters are compounded equally of desire and guilt. At heart, they are moral people, and misbehaving takes a lot out of them. Jack and Edith meet in the woods to make love, and the scenes with a naked Mark Ruffalo and Naomi Watts have a giddy carnal happiness overshadowed with dread—the lovers expect to be found out sooner or later, and they are. The normally explosive Watts is withdrawn this time, her face hardened by anger and longing. A smart, beautiful woman defeated by her husband's infidelities, Edith has closed in on herself; Jack is all she's got, and she wants more and more sex with him as a way of blanking out on her life. A thick black beard covers Ruffalo's handsome features, and his voice is plaintive, his manner abashed and defensive. His Jack is a reluctant satyr, a decent guy who, disappointed with his life, is behaving like a heel and a hypocrite, attacking his wife when he feels bad about himself, and Ruffalo speaks slowly, meditatively, letting us peer below his muffled surface into Jack's unconscious. In his restrained way, he gives a risk-taking performance of daunting complexity. Peter Krause, as Hank, is less interesting. Tall and good-looking, Hank, a failed writer, carries on affairs with women his own age and flirts with his students; his impossible attitude is that people should have as much sex as they want but somehow avoid hurting anyone else. "Keep the peace," he counsels, just as he's doing everything he can to disturb it. Krause's unruffled manner may be generally right for Hank—a master of passive-aggressive one-upmanship—but Krause is unnecessarily subdued and opaque. A convictionless rotter, Hank never really comes alive for us.

It's the only weakness in the production. The director, John Curran, who made "Praise," in Australia, in 1998, is new to me, but he's obviously a whiz with actors: the squalling marital fights are intense, a little scary, but thrilling to watch. Curran lets the actors set the rhythm of the scenes and ride the crest of their emotions. He doesn't underline the moments with excessive cutting or hyper-emphatic closeups; the scenes play to a natural conclusion, and we are left to sort things out for ourselves. Curran may be one of those rare directors with an instinctive feeling for texture and pacing. He frames this discordant material with formal elegance and a soothing, even redemptive beauty—the right aesthetic strategy, I think, since other people's unhappiness, however fascinating, can be merely tawdry when offered without the relief of lyricism. "We Don't Live Here Anymore" breaks into three acts (corresponding to three quarrels between Jack and Terry), separated by a freight train mysteriously rumbling through a crossing. The train is a sustaining motif, as are Michael Convertino's undulating cello theme and the lovely cinematography of Maryse Alberti, who creates a canopy of nature over the characters, season after season, which tells us that life will go on for these four—they may not find happiness, but they will survive. Scene by scene, the movie is precise, vibrant, and, for all its turmoil, moving, and it culminates in Dern's strongest moment, when she tells Ruffalo, rage fighting against fear, her whole body quaking, that she would love him even if he were a bum. Terry wants to be loved for who she is, not for what she does or doesn't do, which is what we all want, I suppose, though few of us are willing to say it as openly as Terry does. Her demand makes this modern love story a true heartbreaker, and one wonders, Are there many moviegoers out there for this kind of impassioned work? The artists have done their job. Now it's the audience's turn. ♦

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THE BACK PAGE BY PAUL SLANSKY

THE THIRTEENTH HUNDRED DAYS: THE QUIZ

1. Three of these statements were made by George W. Bush. Which one was made by Senator Rick Santorum (R-Pa.)?

(a) "Our enemies are innovative and resourceful, and so are we. They never stop thinking about new ways to harm our country and our people, and neither do we."

(b) "Tribal sovereignty means that it's sovereign. You're a—you've been given sovereignty and you're viewed as a sovereign entity."

(c) "Iraqis are sick of foreign people coming in their country and trying to destabilize their country, and we will help them rid Iraq of these killers."

(d) "Isn't that the ultimate homeland security—standing up and defending marriage?"

Who's who?

2. Alberto Gonzales.
3. Tony Robinson.
4. Steven Galson.
5. Thomas B. Griffith.
6. Devon Largio.
7. Terry Holt.

(a) The Bush federal-appeals-court nominee who practiced law in Utah for four years without a state license.

(b) The college student whose honors thesis found that the Bush Administration offered twenty-three different rationales for the Iraq war.

(c) The federal drug official who rejected the 23–4 recommendation of an advisory panel and refused to allow a morning-after birth-control pill to be sold over the counter.

(d) The former Army interrogation instructor who said of the Abu Ghraib prison photographs, "Frat hazing is worse than this."

(e) The author of the 2002 memo to George W. Bush which said that the war on terrorism "renders quaint" certain provisions of the Geneva Conventions.

(f) The Bush campaign official who referred to stem-cell researchers who oppose restrictions on their work as "mad scientists out of control."

8. Complete George W. Bush's statement: "The reason ____________."

(a) I can't stop saying 'the American people are safer' [is] because the American people are safer

(b) I keep insisting that there was a relationship between Iraq and Saddam and Al Qaeda [is] because there was a relationship between Iraq and Al Qaeda

(c) people all over the world think the United States government authorized torture [is] because the United States government did authorize torture

(d) Jenna stuck her tongue out at those reporters [is] those reporters deserved to have their tongues stuck out at

9. What caused Dick Cheney to say to Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), "Fuck yourself"?

(a) Leahy had said, "So, Dick, you didn't think you needed to check with the boss before ordering planes full of civilians to be shot down?"

(b) Leahy had made a comment comparing Cheney's "quintuple-deferment war record" with John Kerry's heroics.

(c) Leahy had pointed out how many no-bid contracts had gone to Halliburton.

(d) Leahy had said, "Cheney's turned into a James Bond villain."

10. Three of these statements describe Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz. Which one describes his boss, Donald Rumsfeld?

(a) He publicly understated the number of deaths of United States soldiers in Iraq by more than two hundred at a congressional hearing.

(b) He scoffed at the notion that prisoners' "quality of life" was compromised at Abu Ghraib, saying, "Whether they have a PX or a good restaurant is not the issue."

(c) He told a House committee hearing that so many negative stories are coming out of Iraq because reporters are "afraid to travel very much, so they sit in Baghdad and they publish rumors."

(d) He conceded, after a good deal of questioning by a Senate committee, that putting a bag over someone's head for seventy-two hours was "not humane."

11. In May, the White House announced that George W. Bush would deliver five weekly speeches intended to shore up support for his Iraq policies. How many of the five did he deliver before abandoning the effort?

(a) One. (c) Three.
(b) Two. (d) Four.

12. Which statement did Ron Reagan not make?

(a) "Dad . . . never made the fatal mistake of so many politicians: wearing his faith on his sleeve to gain political advantage."

(b) "My father didn't know George W. Bush from Adam."

(c) "Cheney brought my mother up to the casket . . . she has glaucoma and has trouble seeing. There were steps, and he left her there. He just stood there, letting her flounder. I don't think he's a mindful human being."

(d) "My father wouldn't have had to prove how macho he was by waving around Saddam's gun."

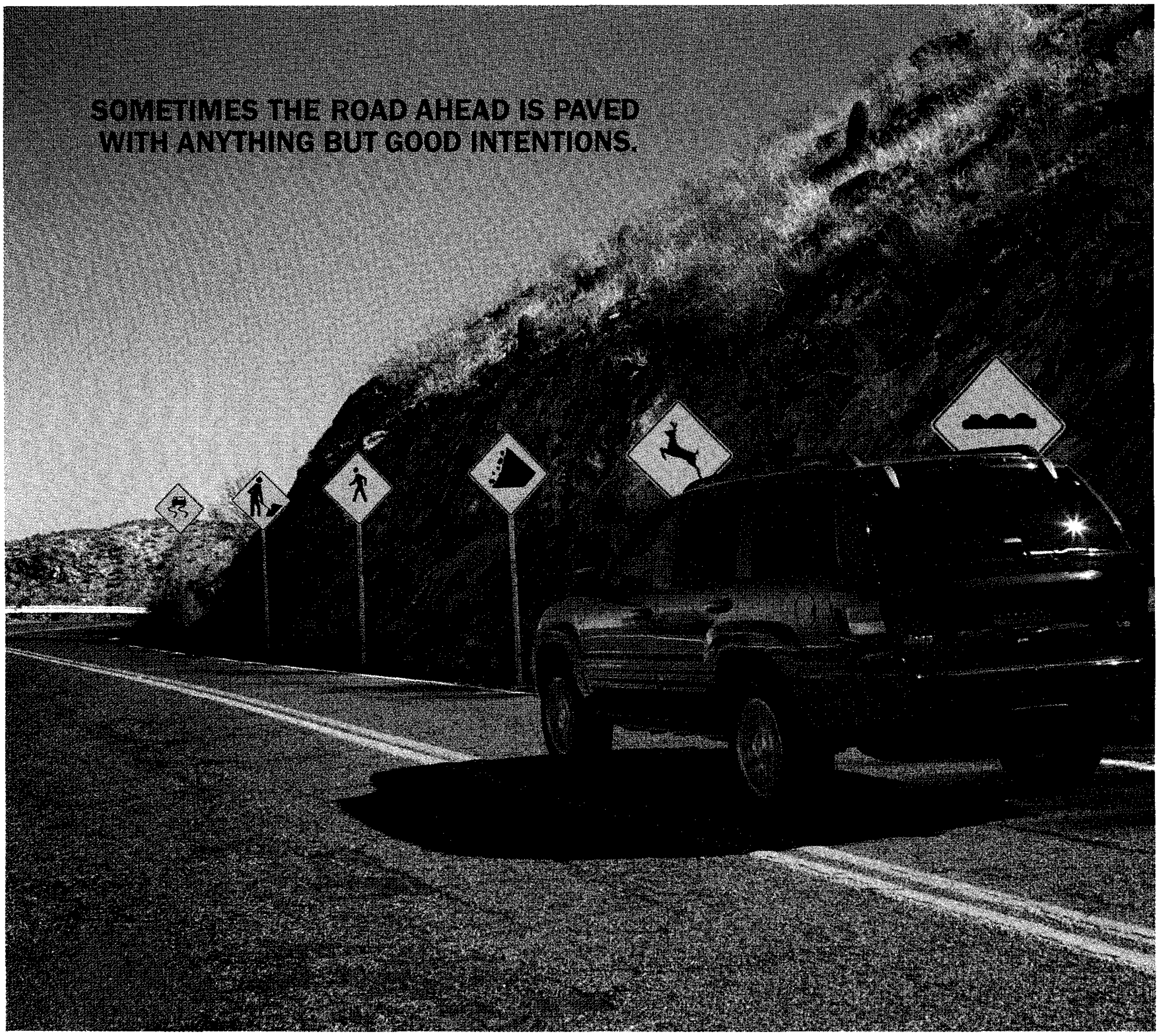
13. Where was the Cheney rally at which people were refused admission unless they signed this statement: "I, (full name) . . . do herby [sic] endorse George W. Bush for re-election of the United States"?

(a) Missouri. (c) Nevada.
(b) Michigan. (d) New Mexico.

14. How did George W. Bush pronounce the name of Abu Ghraib prison, the site of the abuses that he claimed to have been "disgusted of" and "disgraced about"?

(a) "Abugah-rayp."
(b) "Abu-gareff."
(c) "Abu-garon" and "Abu-garah."
(d) All of the above.

Answers:
(1) d, (2) e, (3) d, (4) c, (5) a, (6) b, (7) f, (8) b,
(9) c, (10) b, (11) a, (12) d, (13) d, (14) d.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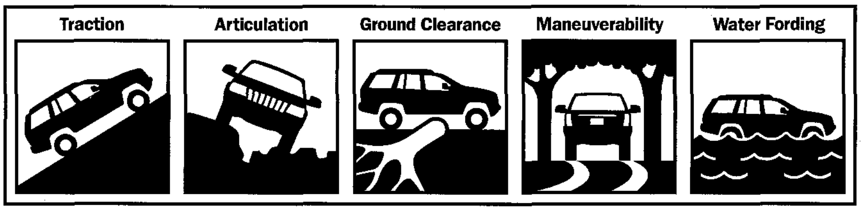
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